# A CULTURAL HISTORY OF AFGHANISTAN

*Yet Thro' the mist of ages past we trace*
*The dazzling glories of a wonderous race*

*Curzon*

KABUL-1964

MOHAMMED ALI

# A CULTURAL HISTORY OF AFGHANISTAN

WITH 24 ILLUSTRATIONS

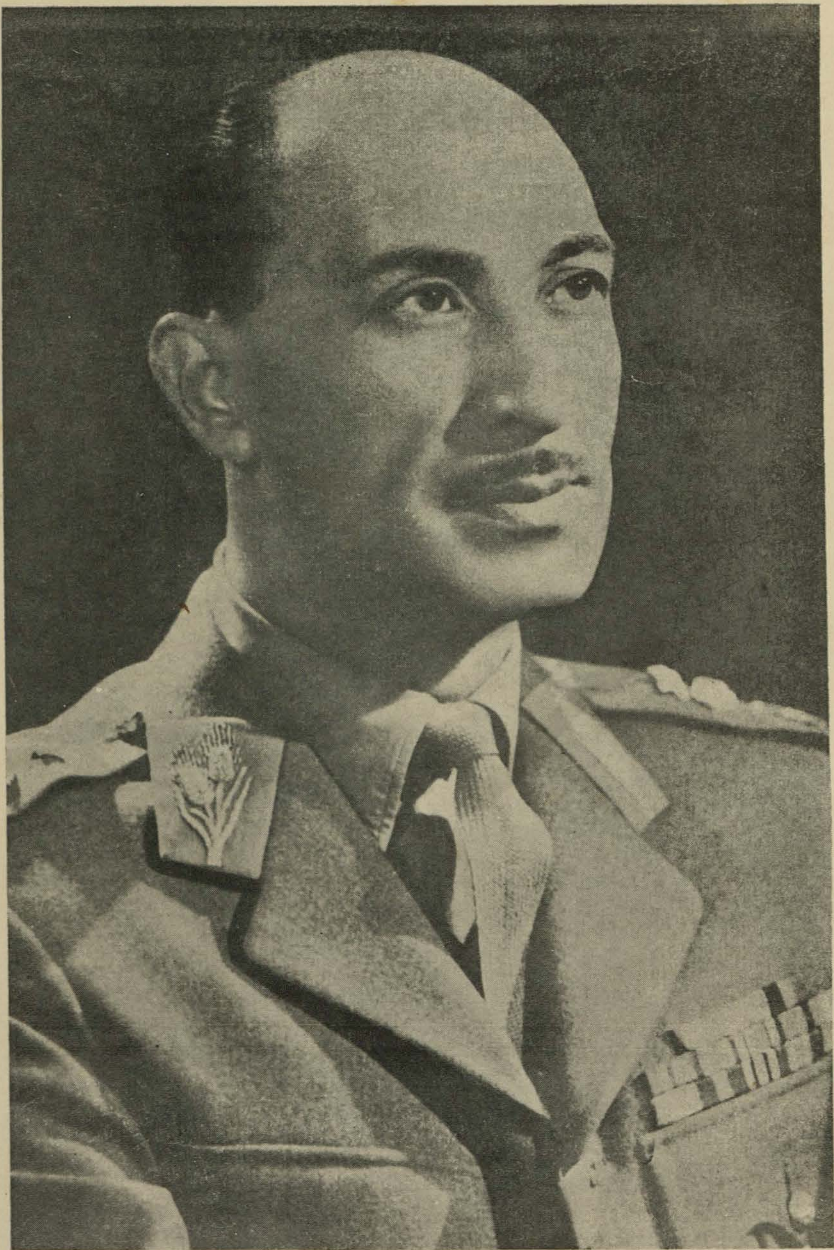
*By*
MOHAMMED ALI

KABUL
1964

*Published by*
*Mohammed Ali*
*Karta Char, Kabul.*



*Printed by*
*Malik Muhammad Saeed*
*at the Punjab Eductional Press*
*Lahore (Pakistan W.)*



*His Majesty*
*MOHAMMED ZAHIR SHAH*
*King of Afghanistan*

*Dedicated to*

*His Majesty King Mohammed Zahir Shah*

*whose benevolent reign of thirty years has*

*been a period of unprecedented peace,*

*progress, and prosperity*

★

## FOREWORD

BY

## H. R. H. MARSHAL SARDAR SHAH WALI

I have read Professor Mohammed Ali's recent book "A Cultural History of Afghanistan" with avid interest. There is hardly a printed book in English or any other foreign language dealing with the subject, and I must say that Professor Ali's book is the first attempt of its kind which, I hope, will be looked upon as a milestone in the literature of our country. No other work in my knowledge offers a study of the trends of thought with such critical detail and careful precision. The author, who, I am surprised, has been able to find time despite his multifarious duties to undertake a work of such monumental nature, is to be warmly congratulated. His task was difficult and he had to break new ground, but I am glad to see that he has done full justice to the subject.

Afghanistan, as the author rightly remarks, occupies a unique position in history and has never lagged behind any country in its service to mankind. It is all the more surprising and regrettable that until the publication of the present volume no attempt has been made to write a cultural history of the country which enriched humanity with such splendid and massive contribution to literature and thought.

To the students of the Middle East, Professor Ali needs no fresh introduction. He is already known to the literary circles as the author of no less than a dozen books in English depicting different aspects of Afghan life and history. His scholarship and his encyclopaedic knowledge are again evident in the pages of his latest book which seems to be his masterpiece. I have no doubt it will be warmly received by those who are interested in Afghanistan.

I hope Professor Ali will continue to traverse his path with the same fervour and devotion, and I shall look forward to the publication of this valuable work.

Shah wali

13-1-1964.

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# PREFACE

While there is no dearth of scholarly works on Afghan political history, it is a surprising fact that no serious attempt has ever been made to write a cultural history of the country in a foreign language. The development of Afghan civilisation is a subject of absorbing interest. The subject has a wide import and deep philosophical significance. The cultural part of Afghan history, furnishing a striking illustration of the impact of many divergent cultures, which were gradually absorbed and presented to the world in a new form, surely deserves the serious attention of a student of sociology. From the dawn of history, Afghanistan has been the meeting ground of conflicting civilisations ; migratory hordes and conquering armies have poured down in unending succession, bringing with them, like the floods of the Nile, much destruction, but also valuable deposits which enriched the ancient soil, and out of which grew fresher and even more luxuriant cultures.

Afghans are known all over the world as a martial race, as people who have been fighting all through the ages in a desperate attempt to preserve their independence. Their heroic deeds on many a field of battle and their innumerable sacrifices in defence of their motherland need no fresh commentaries. But people often receive a mild surprise when they hear of an eminent Afghan scholar, politician or writer, or that the Afghans in their long and glorious history have been able to produce a body of religious thinkers, philosophers, mystics, mathematicians, astronomers, historians and artists. Indeed, their prowess in the field of battle has prejudiced most of their chances of being taken seriously in other fields.

It is true that many conquerors and warriors emerged from the country sword in hand, who, sweeping swiftly across the neighbouring countries, succeeded in establishing vast and powerful

empires and in developing highly efficient administrative machinery, but more significant is the trek of the innumerable pious souls, religious reformers, who went abroad soaked in love. Human service was their armour, and they went from place to place teaching and preaching their gospel of godliness and love. Wherever they went they did also conquer, not lands, but human hearts, using neither force nor threats ; it was a conquest of love and ideas. One only needs look into the history of these people to realize how much they have contributed towards the uplift of the spiritual life of humanity. Moral education, spiritual training and human service formed the cornerstone of this group of people. The soul of man was sought to be illuminated and his moral character built up. To achieve these noble ends, they did not need nor did they seek the influence of royalty or the force of arms.

It is a matter of great regret and disappointment that this side of Afghan history, which, besides possessing much intrinsic value, sheds light on the thought and culture of the modern world, has not so far aroused the interest of scholars and orientalists. Owing chiefly to this lack of interest, few possess any connected information about the literature in which the civilisation of the modern world could be traced to its source.

My object in presenting this concise history is to convey to the inquiring mind a true and vivid picture and a correct estimate of the cultural aspects of the Afghans. As the reader will observe, I have tried to make this book pleasant reading and I have not allowed it to be mere dry research, or what might be called too scientific. I have done my best to avoid useless controversies and to render the book as attractive and as useful to my readers as possible, without in the least impairing its historical or its literary value.

I am fully conscious of my shortcomings and confess that I have neither the leisure nor the capacity to undertake a work of such magnitude, for many of these cultural facts are deeply shrouded in obscurity. All that I aim at is a modest attempt to provide a guide ; no claim is made to an all-embracing fulness and philosophical completeness. My object is to provoke a study in

this direction. I would have loved to do more than what I have been able to do, but I have my own limitations. I take consolation in the fact that the ball has been set rolling in the right direction and that some daring soul will take the thread and complete the work so humbly begun.

On the basis of the scanty knowledge thus far available, this history of the Afghan culture is divided into two parts ; the first deals with ancient Afghanistan until the advent of Islam (middle of the seventh century A. D.) ; the second is the Muslim period, from the Arab invasion of Afghanistan to the present.

I would like to remove one misunderstanding at the very start. Most of our writers in the Islamic period wrote their books in Persian. This has led or I should say misled some people to believe that these writers were Persian by origin. Even now quite a large number of Afghans speak Persian and write their books in that language, and it would be no exaggeration to say that but for the role played by the Afghans in the development of the Persian language, it could have hardly attained the high standard of excellence which it enjoys today. Quite a large number of modern scholars, Afghans as well as foreigners, admit that classical Persian (or more properly the Dari dialect) flourished on Afghan soil and from there it spread westward towards Shiraz and Isphahan. Although the tongue is the same as that spoken in modern Iran, the enormous difference in environment, which influenced the growth of Persian in Afghanistan, justifies a separate and concise record of all of Afghanistan's accomplishments in the field of literature as well as in the arts.

The Persian language in Afghanistan grew independently under the patronage of her own kings and under the direct influence of local environments, which naturally gave rise to certain inevitable differences in the use of particular words or phrases as well as in their pronunciation. Iran's Persian of today differs vastly from classical Persian, which is still, to a large extent, in vogue in this country.

One word more before I conclude. Today, when the world of thought is more eager than ever to understand things which are

normally beyond the realm of experimental science, when scientific thought itself is coming nearer to mystic thought, when psychology is beginning to be regarded as a science, when man feels again the need of superhuman aid, I feel that the presentation of this small treatise, representing our cultural heritage and the part played by our thinkers in the uplift of humanity in this storm-tossed world, is definitely called for.

I sincerely hope that this work, containing mostly the development of various cultures on Afghan soil and the biographies of some of our famous writers, philosophers and thinkers, together with their message of love and goodwill, will help in rekindling the spiritual life of Asia and in serving as an ambassador of cordial understandings between East and West, between the old school of thought and spiritualism and the new school of action and materialism. I am also confident that the great ideals and lofty philosophy of oriental thought, in which Afghanistan plays an important role, will solve some of the intricate problems with which the world of today is faced, and to revive the spirit of tolerance and broad-mindedness, which neither despises nor fears a nation of another creed or colour. In the words of the great British philosopher-historian, Professor Arnold J. Toynbee, "The search of spiritual truth may keep the human race from committing mass suicide."

In the end I would like to thank all those who lent me their helping hand in the compilation and printing of this book. To acknowledge all my personal obligations is impossible, for so many have helped me one way or another. Of these I owe a very special debt of gratitude to His Royal Highness Marshal Sardar Shah Wali, Victor of Kabul, and His Excellency Sayid Qasim Rishtiya, Minister of Press, for the encouragement, good counsel and valuable help which I received from them from time to time. Next my heartfelt gratitude goes to my esteemed friends Mrs. Kent Thomas Hawley and Dr. Harold Amoss, who very kindly went through the MS and gave me numerous references and suggestions. I would also express my sincere thanks to The Asia Foundation for providing adequate means for the printing of

this book. I am grateful to Mr. Fahimi and Mr. Asafi of the Press Ministry and Mr. Motamidi, Director-General of the Kabul Museum, for most of the illustrations that appear in this work.

And finally, I should like to take this opportunity to pay a tribute of thanks to my daughter, Dr. Mahgul Ali, M. D., whose critical sense and clear judgment have been my unfailing help in writing these pages.

MOHAMMED ALI

*Karta Char, Kabul,*
*Afghanistan.*
*January 1, 1964.*

CHAPTER I

# LAND AND PEOPLE

The term Afghanistan, which means the land of the Afghans, was applied to the country for the first time during the reign of Ahmad Shah (1747-1773), the founder of the Durrani dynasty. Previously it was known by the names of Aryana, Pactiya, Khurasan, Pushtunkhwah and even Roh. Ahmad Shah Durrani refers to it in his poems as Pushtunkhwah, which means the land of the Pushtuns. Roh is an obsolete term signifying a mountain and was chiefly used by the Afghan kings of India for the south-eastern part of Afghanistan, which is mostly mountainous in character. The word Rohilla, derived from it, was applied to the Afghans who settled in India. Pactiya, too, is an old term, used for the first time by Herodotus, the famous Greek historian of the fifth century B.C.; while most of the classical writers have called it Aryana, Ariana, or Airyana, which means the land of the Aryans. Khurasan, "the land of the rising sun," was applied to the country by the early Muslim writers, though its extent was far greater than it is today.

It is rather difficult to fix the limits of Afghanistan, taking into consideration its geographical, historical and ethnographical aspects, either in the past or even in modern times. Attempts have been made from time to time to lay down a scientific and precise geographical definition of Afghanistan. To some of the classical writers, foremost among these being Strabo, Aryana was the country lying between the Jaxartes and the Indus, and comprised the following provinces :

(1) Balkh (old names : Bakhdi, Balhika, Bactrish or Bactria), now the province of Mazar-i-Sharif.

(2) Aeria (Areia, Hariwa or Haraewas), modern Herat.

(3) Sogdiana (Soghdonia, Transoxiana or Mawraulnahr), the modern republics of Tajkistan and Uzbekistan.

(4) Margu (Margiana, Merv, Khwarizm, or Mouru), the valley of the Murghab.

(5) Tocharistan, the modern province of Kataghan and Badakhshan.

(6) Gandhara, the country of the lower Kabul valley, including the districts of Nagahara (modern Nangrahar or Jalalabad), Peshawar, Swat, Bajawar and Charsadah.

(7) Paropamisus (Paropanisus—overtopping the ceiling of even an eagle's nest—Paropamisadae, Capisene) the modern districts of Kohdaman, Capisa or Parwan.

(8) Arachosia (Arakotia, Arakozi or Harhahvaiti) the modern province of Kandahar, watered by the Arghandab and the Helmand.

(9) Gedrosia, modern Baluchistan.

(10) Zaranka (Drangiana, Sakastan, Sakastene, Zaranj, or Sijistan), modern Seistan.

(11) Parthia, the land between the Caspian and Herat.

(12) Mekran, modern Kirman.

(13) Faradatha (Prophthasia), now Farah.

(14) Thatagush (Sattagydai), modern Hazarajat.

Even at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the country extended from Herat to Kashmir and from the Oxus to the Arabian Sea. It suffered great diminution when the grandsons of Ahmad Shah Durrani contested for power. This fraticidal war, which dragged on with unabated fury for more than a quarter of a century, crippled heavily the resources of the country and thereby made it an easy prey for foreign aggression and intrigues. The first to avail themselves of the opportunity were the Sikhs, who under their leader, Ranjit Singh, overran the Punjab, Multan and Kashmir. In 1818, shortly after the death of Wazir Fateh Khan, the influential Barakazi chief, at the hands of Kamran and his father Mahmud, the Sikhs were bold enough to cross the Indus and take possession of Peshawar and the outiying districts. After the collapse of the Sikh power in 1849,

the British entered the field and taking advantage of the chaotic condition prevailing in Afghanistan, pushed their frontiers further west. Treaties were forced on the unwilling Amirs from time to time irrespective of all pledges given and against international rights and without taking into consideration the historical, geographical, racial and cultural ties of the people. "The architects of the British Empire in the East," as Dr. Fletcher, the American historian, rightly remarks, "were statesmen rather than anthropologists. They made the serious mistake of bifurcating some of the tribes. The situation added to the irascible temper of the people and the difficult terrain successfully prevented British pacification."

At present Afghanistan is a land-locked country, covering an area of about 270,000 square miles. It is 700 miles long from east to west and 500 miles wide from north to south at its longest and widest points.

**Physical Features**

Afghanistan is a highland ; its average height being 4,000 feet above sealevel. A lofty mountain range, a continuation of the Himalayas, known by the general name of the Hindu Kush (Asian Caucasus or Paropamisus of old) runs through the heart of the country, mostly from the northeast to the southwest. Though high and "tooth-breaking" (*dandan-shiken*), this central range is by no means impassable. It is pierced at several places by passes, through which, in ages past, have passed invaders and traders, and with them the cultures that have an important part in shaping the world's history. The best-known passes of this range (that are still the chief commercial links between the Oxus and the Indus basins) are as follows : the Khawak (11,640 ft.), Khoknoll (11,450 ft.), Til (11,640 ft.), Salang and Bajgah (12,300 ft.), Kaoshan (14,340 ft.), Chahardar (11,300 ft.), Bamian (8,830 ft.) and Shibar (9,800 ft.). It was through the Bamian Pass that the famous Chinese pilgrim, Huien Tsang, passed on his way to India in the early part of the seventh century A. D. Until the construction of the new road through

the Shikari Pass (in 1932), this route was most frequently used. At present a new road is being built through the Salang Pass, which will shorten the journey between Kabul and the northern districts by about 100 kilometers.

Egypt is truly called "the gift of the Nile," for without the Nile life would be impossible in that country. Afghanistan may safely be called "the gift of the Hindu Kush," for the lofty summits of this range serve as natural reservoirs, feeding the Afghan rivers and streams throughout the year. Afghanistan has very little rainfall and even that is confined to winter and early spring. Summers are always hot and dry and it is at this time that water is badly needed for irrigation purposes. The melting of the snow accumulated on the lofty peaks of the Hindu Kush then meets this urgent demand by feeding the rivers and streams that leap down the sides of this great mountain system. All the great cities of Afghanistan, that have been the seats of culture and flourishing trade centres, either in the past or in modern times, are indebted to this magnificent mountain system and owe their very existence and prosperity to it.

The Hindu Kush is not only the abode of eternal snow, it is the legislator of Afghan climate as well. Snow clings to the height in thick layers from year to year and small glaciers move down upon high valleys below. Dashing streams plunge headlong from the cliffs in cascades and race through deep gorges. Less beautiful but of greater use to the people are the basins and valleys below. The mountainsides constitute vast meadows, where shepherds graze their flocks in spring and summer, and where wild flowers give a wonderful fragrance. The growing season at these heights shrinks to a few months each year, and the crops grown there must mature in a short time and be able to resist frost. The bracing air and bright sunshine delight everyone. The sky is often blue, the sunset a blazing scarlet, and the nights wonderfully beautiful. When the sun sets swiftly in the night, the silent procession of a myriad stars gradually comes out, filling in the dark firmament, whispering unutterable mysteries to those who

lie listening under the vault of heaven and gazing into the immeasurable immensities above.

## River System

The Afghan rivers are mostly snow-fed. They receive precipitation during the winter and early spring, and the rivers discharge a maximum amount of water during the months of April and May, causing frequent floods. A large number of streams are nonperennial and are completely lost in the sands.

The rivers of Afghanistan can be divided into three categories :—

(1) The rivers of the Oxus basin, which have no outlet to the sea. The rivers of this category are the Oxus proper, the Kokcha, the Kunduz, the Balkh, the Murghab and the Hari Rud.

(2) The rivers of the Helmand valley, which, too, have no outlet to the sea, and which empty themselves in the Seistan Lake. Chief rivers of this category are : the Helmand or (Hermand Etamandoros of old), the Arghandab, Tarnak, the Khash Rud and the Farah Rud.

(3) The third largest system is that of the Indus basin, chief among these being the Kabul (Kubha of old), the Panjsher, the Lohgar, the Ghorband, the Alishang, the Alinghar, the Gomal, the Tochi and the Kunar.

The rivers of Afghanistan, with the exception of the Oxus, in the extreme north, due to their rapid currents and seasonal flow, are not navigable, but form good sources for generating electricity.

## Climate

Afghanistan, with most of her territories spread over mountain slopes and cut by gorges and deep valleys, is a land of great varieties of scenery and climate. In the course of a few hours one may go from the tropical heat of the semi-desert lowlands, with temperature rising to 115 degrees F., and the dry

winds scattering particles of dust, to the cool highland plateau, some 8,000 feet above the sea, with refreshing breezes, bringing the fragrance of the verdant Alpine meadows and the chill of the snowcapped peaks. One may go from the oppressive heat of Jalalabad to the bracing air and the aroma of the pine forests of the Speenghar (Afghan Mount Blanc) ; a little above there are places as cold as in the frigid zone. However, with all the extremes of her terraced areas, Afghanistan, being a highly elevated land, has a dry continental climate, with cold and wet winters, hot and dry summers, warm days and chilly nights. In spring it is aflame with different colours and in autumn there is a stinging chill in the air. On the whole, the climate is salubrious and the harsh environment has been a blessing to the people, who are hardy and well-built.

**The People**

Geographical diversity has created a large number of cultural and tribal groups. Afghanistan became a meeting ground of various races and different cultures very early in history. Mostly, the Afghans of today are of caucasoid stock, though people of other races are not uncommon. They speak various languages and dialects, Pushtu and Persian being the most important. The religion of the Afghans is overwhelmingly Islam, which has contributed largely to the bond of solidarity between the tribes. Lack of means of communication, coupled with the difficult nature of the country, where road-making and maintaining is a difficult problem, presents obstacles in uniting these tribes and welding them into a single strong nation. Despite the divergences of languages and races, there has existed, throughout the long and chequered history of Afghanistan, a cultural bond among her people, that has sustained them through all hardships. So far as literature is concerned, there are striking similarities : the themes, the ideas, the style and the spirit are more or less the same all over the country.

The Afghans are gallant warriors and are famed for their valour all over the world. The course of their history has been



*His Royal Highness Prince Ahmad Shah*
*Eldest son of His Majesty the King*
*and*
*Honorary President of Afghan Red Crescent Society*

*Young and energetic, Prince Ahmad Shah takes a very keen interest in public welfare. Under his guidance and patronage the Afghan Red Crescent Society has made tremendous progress and people are now realizing fully the importance of such beneficial institutions. Every day one hears of contributions pouring in from all parts of the country. This liberal and voluntary co-operation of large section of the well-to-do class has enabled the Society to relieve the distress of the poor and help them live a better and comfortable life.*

*The Society has vast plans in hand, and it is hoped that in near future it will play a much important role in moral and material uplift of the country.*

extremely devious. Under a strong ruler, one who could unite these tribes, the Afghans achieved marvels and were able to establish vast and powerful empires with great centres of trade and arts ; while in the absence of a strong central authority, they destroyed with their own hands the towering edifices which they had previously erected. Unfortunately, like the Arabs, wherever they went, they carried with them their intense jealously-guarded individualism, which in the long run proved their undoing.

Increasingly, as time goes by, Afghan citizens of all ethnic descriptions are feeling themselves to be Afghan first, and members of this or that group afterwards. These ties, with the spread of modern education and better means of communication, have become greatly strengthened. No split along the ethnic lines has threatened the unity of the nation since the turn of the present century. Even in the past, economic, social and ethnical distinctions were always forgotten in face of a national emergency. The Afghans, in their wars with the British, readily rallied around their national leaders, regardless of their ethnic backgrounds. "In their invasions of Afghanistan", as Percival Spear rightly remarks, "the British had left one vital factor out of their calculations, the feelings of the Afghans themselves. These proud, turbulent, and undaunted mountaineers cherished their independence above all things. The presence of the British united them as nothing else could have done. The attempt to counter a much exaggerated Russian threat foundered on the rocks of Afghan love of independence and of lengthy communications".

Drawn together by their loyalty to their chief and to the soil, Afghans have always kept their patriotic spirit and have been intolerant of foreign rule. To the Afghans their nativeland is ever dear to them, and there is hardly any nook in the mountains or corner in a far-off village that does not bring remembrances of past glory, or around which ancient myths and legends are not woven. That is why, even on his death-bed, an Afghan requests his relatives or friends to take his body to his native village and to inter it in the family cemetery.

Afghan society is deeply permeated by a democratic spirit. There is no subject class, and no one is treated with disrespect because of his birth. There is a general awareness of human dignity. Islam seems to have a singularly strong effect in keeping Afghan society free from rigid class distinctions, and tribal institutions have been mostly democratic.

CHAPTER II

# INTRODUCTION

The position that Afghanistan occupies in history is a unique one. It is an old land, in the sense that her cultural history goes back over five thousand years. It was here, in all probability, that the Aryans for the first time took to settled life and learned the art of cultivating food-plants, and thus became capable of advancing a high civilisation. From 3,000-1,000 B. C. there sprang from Afghanistan two beams of dazzling light—Brahmanism* and Zoroastrianism—which have jointly influenced world thought and civilisation down to the present time. Similarly, two of the world's most valuable literary monuments—the Rigveda and the Avesta—that shed so much light on the ancient Aryan society, came into being on Afghan soil.

In ages past, Afghanistan, due to its central position, served as a channel for transmitting different cultures to adjacent countries. It was through Afghanistan that Hellenistic culture in a new form (after mingling with local elements) passed into India. Later on, during the days of Kanishka the Great, Buddhism of the Mahayana School penetrated Sinkiang and Far Eastern countries. Again, towards the beginning of the eleventh century A. D., it was through Afghanistan that Islam found its way into the Indian sub-continent.

One of the outstanding features of Afghan culture is its capacity to absorb and adjust, and its power to survive. This culture is a composite one, in the sense that, although in the ultimate analysis it is Afghan in origin, it has not hesitated to absorb whatever came its way from other lands and other peoples

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*Brahmanism is not an appropriate term, for it developed on Indian soil and is based on the Caste System. The Rigvedic Aryans had priests but no distinct and privileged priestly class.

in its long and chequered career. Thus, in the religions, in the languages, in the beliefs, customs, manners and traditions of the people, there has been a continuous flow and intake from outside. But whatever has come in this way has been absorbed and assimilated and has become part of Afghanistan's own heritage. This power of assimilation is as alive and active today as it ever was before. Besides, it has shown an amazing capacity for survival and continuity. It has faced and sometimes even succumbed to foreign invasion, but its social and cultural life has remained intact, and instead of being damaged and destroyed by these vital imports, has been enriched and endowed with strength to develop and grow.

The first recorded contact with the West took place when Alexander the Great invaded Afghanistan in the fourth century B. C. The first native kingdom, during this historical period, that succeeded in unifying the country, was founded by the Graeco-Bactrian kings towards the middle of the third century B. C. This kingdom gave Afghanistan a measure of political unity and material propsperity. Peace reigned, commerce developed, and contact between the two cultures led to exchange in architecture, thought, language, political institutions, and social customs. Bactria became the seat of a highly developed culture and its inhabitants carried on a highlevel of agriculture and had a lucrative trade with far off China and distant western countries.

After the death of Alexander the Great, his vast empire fell to pieces. In the course of the internecine struggle between his generals, Seleucus Nicator was successful in Asia, who, driving his antagonist, Antigonos, into exile, entered Babylon triumphantly in 312 B. C. Six years later, assuming the royal title, he made up his mind to recover the Macedonian conquests in the east. In pursuit of his plan, he crossed the Indus in or about 305 B. C., and attempted to imitate the victorious march of Alexander. The datails of this campaign are not known, but it is certain that Seleucus was obliged to retire hurriedly and to conclude a humiliating peace. According to this treaty, he was forced to relinquish all his claims to the territories south of the Hindu Kush to

Chandragupta, founder of the Maurya dynasty. Under the great Buddhist sovereign, Asoka, grandson of Chandragupta, this region (the satrapies of Paropamisadae, Arachosia and Aeria) was converted to Buddhism. At the same time northern Afghanistan was able to assert its independence under a Bactrian Greek prince, Diodotus by name, who was able to maintain some semblance of Hellenistic culture in the country.

As early as 135 B. C., the Graeco-Bactrians were driven out of Bactria by an invading horde known as Sakas (or Scythians), and the rule of the last Greek kings was confined to the satrapy of Paropamisadae, with their local capital at Capisa.

It was not long before the Sakas in their turn were forced out of Bactria by a fresh horde of invaders, the Yueh-chi, more properly known to historians by the name Kushans. Their power gradually increased and they soon made themselves masters not only of the Kabul Valley, but also of the northern part of the Indian sub-continent. This conquest involved the disposal of the Sakas, and the overthrow of the last Greek sovereign, Harmeaus. The founder of this new line was Kajula Kadphises. His grandson, Kanishka the Great (2nd century A. D.) extended his conquests from Central Asia to Bengal. He is frequently referred to as a second Asoka because of his zeal for the propagation of Buddhism. Under his encouragement and patronage, Afghanistan became a veritable holy land of Buddhism. Besides, it was during the reign of Kanishka that Aryana enjoyed its period of greatest prosperity. Trade flourished and Afgnanistan virtually became a commercial entrepot of East and West. A new school of art, the Graeco-Buddhist, or more properly the Gandhara School of Sculpture, came into being.

The dynasty of Kanishka lasted hardly a century, since by the middle of the third century A. D., an invasion of Shahpur I, the Sassanid, brought to an end the rule of the last king of this line, and with it the early school of Graeco-Buddhist sculpture came to an end. Buddhism was deprived of the influential support extended to it by the Kushan emperors. For a period of a century and a half Buddhist art virtually ceased to exist. The

establishment of the Kidara dynasty, the "Lesser Kushans", as they are often called, towards the close of the fourth century, ushered in a new period of artistic activity. This final florescence was characterized by works in stucco, the best specimens of which can be seen in the Kabul Museum. The famous site of Hadda, six miles south of Jalalabad, has become world-renowned as a centre of stucco sculpture.

These Kidara-Kushans showed the same undaunted spirit of independence as their post-Kanishka predecessors. But their success, too, was short-termed ; they were probably able to maintain themselves only until about 460 A. D., when Afghanistan and northwestern India were overrun by the White Huns, or Ephthalites. These ferocious barbarians carried ruin and destruction wherever they went and literally extirpated Buddhism by the demolishing of monasteries and the wholesale massacre of the population. The Graeco-Buddhist style survived only in isolated and out-of-the-way Buddhist establishments and only as late as the seventh and eight centuries.

The Arab invasion of Afghanistan, towards the middle of the seventh century, however, opened a new chapter in the domain of art, architecture, language and culture. Since then Islam has been the dominating force and the greatest unifying power in this country. Under the patronage of the Ghaznavids (11th and 12th centuries) Afghanistan once more became a great centre of art and learning and Ghazni, their capital, vied successfully with Baghdad, the metropolis of Islam. Due to royal patronage a number of poets, astronomers, mathematicians, historians and artists flocked to Ghazni from all parts of the Muslim world. Their contribution to science and literature enriched and influenced the entire world. The sculptural work at Ghazni occupies a new place in the figurative arts of Islam and is among the most ancient existing evidences of the use of marble.

Unfortunately, Ghazni received a severe setback at the hands of Alaud-din Jahansuz (World Burner) of the Ghori dynasty in the middle of the 12th century, and again in the early part of the 13th, when the ruthless Mongolian hordes, under the leadership

of Gengiz Khan, "the scourge of God," swooped down upon the country carrying death and destruction wherever they went. Afghanistan never recovered from this shock and as a result of this catastrophe, unparalleled in human history, most of the Afghan cities, centres of trade and arts, such as Balkh, Bamian, Herat and Ghazni, were literally blotted out. The culture of the country that had been so dynamic and creative declined rapidly losing its expansive vigour. In particular it seemed to grow complacent and to lose its capacity for growth. A wave of pessimism and fatalism spread throughout the country. The idea that life is evil and that escape is the only worthwhile goal gained ground. Every misfortune for which the people themselves were responsible was looked upon as preordained or as a punishment for their past sins and evil deeds. It was also believed that the ability to combat these mishaps and diseases was beyond the means and power of human beings. This pessimistic philosophy restricted initiative and with it the spirit of innovation was gone.

The curtain fell upon this age of Afghan history amid a scene of utter anarchy and disorder. The Afghan power in its homeland broke into pieces, though, at the same time, in India the Afghans were able to hold their own against the incessant invasions of the Mongols. For approximately two hundred years the history of Afghanistan itself remained shrouded in darkness, which was lifted in the beginning of the 15th century by the rising sun of the Timurids, successors of Tamerlane. The next hundred years form a bright epoch in the advancing cycles of Afghan culture. Through the efforts of the Timurids, Herat became a great centre of learning and art. In every department of national life great achievements were made. It was through this source that the Mughals of India and the Saffavids of Iran were inspired.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, due to internal discord and mutual jealousies, Afghanistan became a bone of contention between the two neighbouring empires—the Mughals of India and the Saffavids of Iran. This was a period of decay and stagnation. The Afghans, busy in a hard struggle for the liberation of their

country, could hardly find time to take to learning and arts seriously.

In the beginning of the 18th century, the Afghans were able, after a hard and sanguinary struggle, to lay the foundation of a small kingdom at Kandahar. But the leaders of this new power made a serious mistake. Instead of consolidating their position within the country and liberating the rest of Afghanistan from the foreign yoke, they decided to march right into the heart of Iran to avenge their pent-up grievances. The plan was successfully carried out and with one blow the lofty edifice of the Saffavids lay prostrate at their feet. Again a blunder was committed and of a very serious nature. Instead of ruling Iran from their headquarters at Kandahar, the Afghans decided to shift their capital to the heart of the conquered land, where a handful of them, cut off from their base, were forced to quell internal risings on the one hand and fight two of the most powerful empires of the day—Turkey and Russia—on the other. As no adequate help could reach them from any quarter, the Afghans not only lost their hold on Iran, but at the same time their own nativeland fell prey to foreign aggression. This state of affairs continued until the middle of the 18th century, when a national uprising, headed by Ahmad Shah Durrani, liberated Afghanistan from foreign rule. The Afghans under the leadership of this great king were not only able to wrest free their motherland, but were also in a position to push their frontiers out in all directions and to lay the foundation of a vast and powerful kingdom, which in spite of the ravages of time has lingered in a reduced form to this day.

Unfortunately, soon after the death, of Ahmad Shah Durrani, a civil war broke out, first among the grandsons of this great national leader, then between the two most powerful Afghan tribes—the Durranis and the Barakzais. Afghanistan, as a result of this internecine war, which lasted with unabated fury for more than a quarter of century, lost not only her conquered territories, but a considerable portion of her own land, which was snatched from her and incorporated into British India.

Throughout the 19th century the rising Afghans put up a heroic



*His Royal Highness*
*MARSHAL SARDAR SHAH WALI*
*Hero of Wana and Victor of Kabul*

*Sardar Shah Wali, uncle of H. M. the King and the oldest member of the royal family, has had a long and glorious career. He has spent most of his time in active service and won distinctions on many a field of battle.*

*Though a soldier by profession, the Sardar is a good writer and has a keen literary taste. His style of writing is simple but majestic. His recent book "My Memoirs" depicts in vivid terms two very important phases of Afghan history, the War of Independence and the Struggle for Deliverance, in which the Sardar himself played a very prominent role. This work has been translated into Russian, Chinese and Pushto, and its English version is expected shortly.*

struggle against the British, who in pursuance of aggressive designs and "forward policy," were bent on hoisting the Union Jack on the lofty Hindu Kush. Though the repeated British invasions of Afghanistan ended in complete failure and disaster and each time they were forced to fall back and evacuate the country, the British resources and diplomacy always had the upper hand, and succeeded step by step in converting Afghanistan into a land-locked country which naturally had far-reaching effects on its foreign trade and relations and deprived it of all its avenues of progress and enlightenment.

The beginning of the 20th century once more saw a glorious page opening in Afghan history. The heroic Afghans, under the leadership of the late King, Mohammed Nadir Shah, were not only able to hold their own, but boldly entering the British territory, won a great battle at Thal which compelled the British to recognize the complete independence of Afghanistan both in internal and external affairs.

This brilliant victory infused a new life into the country and paved the way for material as well as cultural progress and prosperity. The Afghans, relieved of foreign pressure, once more had a chance to shape their own destiny by devoting their attention and energies to the peaceful pursuits of arts and learning. By reviving their glorious past, they are now trying hard to occupy a respectable place among the progressive, peaceloving and cultured nations of the world.

PART ONE

# ANCIENT AFGHANISTAN

CHAPTER III

# THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ARYAN CULTURE

The cultural history of the country begins with the settlement of the Aryans in Bactria some three thousand years B. C. We do not know much about the people who lived in Afghanistan before the advent of this martial race. Recent excavations in different parts of the country, especially at Mundigak, not far from Kandahar, reveal a primitive civilisation resembling to some extent the prehistoric civilisations of the Indus basin and of Mesopotamia.

Our knowledge of the Aryans before they settled in northern Afghanistan is scanty and unreliable. There is a great controversy among scholars as to the original habitat of this virile race. Some think that their original home (Arya-Vartha or Arya-Varsha of the Rigveda and Arya-Vaejo of the Avesta) was the country watered by the Oxus and the Murghab, bounded by the Caspian Sea on the west, the Hindu Kush on the south, the Kilas Range on the east, and the Kizilkum and other sandy deserts on the north. Others locate the primitive home of the Aryans in Chinese Turkestan, the Pamirs, even as far away as Germany and the plains of the Danube.

The fact that they lived in a country lying in the temperate zone can be proved by the flora and fauna with which they were familiar. It is generally admitted that they knew the oak, beech, willow, birch, lime, elm, and some coniferous trees. They lived in a country where barley was grown and horses were reared. The usual animal best known to them, besides the horse, were the ox and cow, the sheep, the goat, the pig and probably some species of deer. The ass, the camel, and the elephant were apparently unknown to them at this early stage. The beasts of prey known to them were

the wolf and the bear, but they were not yet familiar with the lion or the tiger.

It is now quite clear that it was in Bactria, northern Afghanistan, that the Aryans for the first time took to sedentary life and laid the foundation of a big city, which, according to the Avesta was called "Bakhdium Sariram Ordovo Darafsham," that is Balkh, the beautiful city of high flags. Philology affords but vague and uncertain evidence respecting the thoughts, beliefs and ideas of these primitive Aryans before they left their homes in central Asia. Fortunately, these Aryans, before they migrated to the other parts of the world, were able to compose two very important religious books, the Rigveda and the Avesta, which throw a flood of light on the manners and customs of these people and help us a great deal in tracing the formation of the earliest Aryan society.

**(*a*) The Rigvedic Age.**

The Rigveda is, undoubtedly, the oldest of the two books. No one can say definitely when it was composed. The first scholarly attempt to solve this tangled problem was probably made by Max Muller, who after a good deal of research and investigation, was forced to admit his failure and to give his verdict on the subject in these few words : "Whether the early Vedic hymns were composed 100 or 1000 or 3000 years B. C., no power on the earth will ever determine."

Two other Sanskrit scholars, Jacobi and Tilak, working independently on the astronomical references of the Rigveda, came to the conclusion that in the Vedic text there are traces of an old calendar, which help one in fixing 6,000 B. C. (according to Tilak) and 4,000 B. C. (according to Jacobi) as the date of some early hymns.

The Rigveda is, undoubtedly, the oldest record of the Aryan people. On the threshold of Afghan literature more than three thousand years ago, one is confronted with a body of lyrical poetry which, though far older than the literary monuments of any other branch of the Indo-Aryan family, is always distinguished by refinement and beauty of thought, as well as in the handling of language and metre.

This ancient poetry has come down to us in the form of a collection of hymns in praise of the Aryan gods. From century to century these hymns were handed down without break or intermission from father to son. The youths of the priestly house spent the prime of their life in learning them by rote from the lips of their grey-headed sires.

The number of hymns contained in the Rigveda is 1028, which are grouped in ten books, *mandalas,* as they are called. Tradition has it that various parts were composed by various priestly families. Some hundred years must have been needed for all the hymns found in the Rigveda to come into being. The poets of the Rigveda themselves mention predecessors in whose style they sing and whose songs they desire to renew, and they also speak of ancestral hymns produced in the days of yore.

One thing needs special mention in this respect. Throughout these hymns, in spite of the number of authors, essentially the same language prevails. It is quite possible to distinguish differences of thought, style and poetical ability, but hardly any difference in dialect.

The Rigveda deals in particular with the elaborate ceremonies and sacrifices performed by the kings, nobles and priests on various occasions. By far the greater part of the poetry of the Rigveda consists of religious lyrics; only the tenth book contains some secular poems. Its hymns are mostly addressed to the gods of the Vedic pantheon, praising their mighty deeds, their greatness and their influence, or beseeching them for wealth in cattle, numerous sons, prosperity, long life and victory.

The gods that are invoked are nearly all personifications of the phenomena of Nature, and this gives occasion for the employment of much beautiful and even noble imagery. The number of gods stated in the Rigveda comes to thirty-three; the most prominent of these are Indra (the war-god), Agni (god of fire), Yama (god of the dead) and Varuna (god of light, heaven and sky). Most of the hymns of the Rigveda are addressed to Indra, who is the apotheosis of the Aryan hero—strong, bearded, of mighty appetite

and a great drinker of the divine liquor, Soma. He fights either with the heavenly thunderbolt or with a mundane bow. He rides on his chariot, raids cattle, and loots and destroys the fortresses of the enemy.

But the most beautiful creation of the Rigvedic hymns is Ushas, the charming goddess of the Dawn. She is celebrated in some twenty hymns. The name, meaning "Shining One," is cognate to the Latin "Aurora" and the Greek "Eos." When this goddess is addressed, the physical phenomenon of dawn is never absent from the poet's mind. She is the most beautiful creature, the charm of which is unsurpassed in the descriptive religious lyrics of any other literature. Ushas is a radiant maiden born in the sky, daughter of Dyaus. She is the bright sister of dark night, and shines with the light of her lover, Surya, who follows her patiently. She is borne on a brilliant chariot, drawn by ruddy steeds. She removes the black robe of night, warding off evil spirits and the hated darkness. She awakens creatures and makes the birds fly up. She is the breath and life of everything.

The following stanzas form one of the finest hymns addressed to this fairest creation of Vedic poetry :

Thou sweetly smilest, goddess fair,
Disclosing all thy youthful grace,
Thy bosom bright, thy radiant face,
And lustre of thy golden hair ;

So shines a fond and winning bride;
    Who robes her form in brilliant guise,
And to her lord's admiring eyes
    Displays her charms with conscious pride ;

Or virgin by her mother decked,
    Who, glorying in her beauty, shews
In every glance, her power she knows
    All eyes to fix, all hearts subject :

Or actress, who by skill in song
    And dance, and graceful gestures light,

And many coloured vestures bright,
Enchants the eager, gazing throng ;

Or maid who, wont her limbs to lave
In some cool stream among the woods,
Where vulgar eye never introdues,
Emerges fairer from the wave.

But closely by the amorous sun
Pursued, and vanquished in the race
Thou soon art locked in his embrace,
And with him blendest into one.

Fair Ushas! though through years untold
Thou hast lived on, yet thou art born
Anew on each succeeding morn,
And so thou art both young and old.*

**Home of the Rigvedic Aryans.**

Historians differ as to the location of the home of the Aryans at the time when these hymns were composed. A minute study of the geographical conditions of the country which these poets mention will undoubtedly solve this intricate problem to some extent. That the Indo-Aryans, at the time when the hymns of the Rigveda arose, had not spread over the plains of the Indian sub-continent is borne out by two facts. First, by topographical considerations, foremost among these being the names of the rivers which still flow through the eastern part of Afghanistan, such as Kubha (the Kabul), the Krumu (the Kurram), the Gomati (the Gomal), the Surasvati (the Swat) and the Sindhu (the Indus or Abaseen) ; and second, by climatic considerations and the flora and fauna of the country mentioned in these hymns. The animal and the plant worlds of the early part of the Rigveda are essentially different from those of the later years. For example, Soma (Homa of the Avesta), the most important plant of the Rigveda, is a product of a hilly country, and is grown mainly on the mountains and must have been easily obtainable, as its juice was used in large quantities for

*Muir—Original Sanskrit Texts.

the daily rituals. In the later period, when the Aryans migrated to the plains of Septa-Sindhu (or Sapta-Sindhava), it was brought from long distances, or substitutes had to be used on account of its rarity. The elephant, an animal which is found in nearly all parts of India and which must have been numerous in those days, is not known to the composers of early Vedic hymns. The Rigveda does not at all mention the banyan tree (Ficus-Indica), which is most characteristic of India and which shades a large area with its widespread foliage. This tree is still considered sacred by the Hindus, but is conspicuous by its absence in Afghanistan. Similarly, rice, the chief product of Indian agriculture and the staple food of the Indians even to this day, is quite unknown to the composers of the Rigveda. The most dreaded Indian animal, the tiger, is also not mentioned in these hymns. The Rigveda also mentions a large number of Aryan tribes, one of them being the Gandharis, breeders of sheep. Gandhara is the historical name of the lower Kabul Valley.

**Political and Social Organizations of the Early Aryans.**

The Aryans were a proud and martial race full of energy and vigour. They had a strong love of action. With their stout arms they wanted to win by force what they could not get by other means. They proudly boast of their valour in their hymns and beseech their gods to help them on battlefields and to bestow upon them new lands, numerous male offspring and cattle.

The Aryans of this early age were divided into tribes, each being a political unit. The tribes were further divided into clans or families, each family having a leader, generally the father (called *grahapati*), who was the head, while his wife (*grahapatni*) was the mistress of the house. The family life was healthy and cheerful, resting upon the sacred tie of marriage, which was considered indissoluble. Husbands were very much attached to their wives, while the latter were extremely faithful to their husbands. The patriarch was the protector as well as the nourisher of all the members of the family, while his wife looked

after and fed the children. The young daughters milked the cows and helped their mother in her household duties.

Young girls had a say in the choice of their husbands; a brave spouse was generally preferred. Sometimes the choice was made in an open competition of valour and strength. Permission to marry a girl was asked from her father or guardian through the mediation of intimate friends. The wedding was usually celebrated in the house of the bride's parents, where the bridegroom went in a procession accompanied by his relatives and friends. The marriage ceremony was held openly ; the bridegroom, taking the bride's hand, led her around the nuptial fire. At the conclusion of the wedding festival, the bride, anointed and in festal array, with her husband mounted a cart adorned with red flowers and drawn by a team of white bulls. She was thus conducted in procession to her new home. In the hymns we hear of married couples who, with minds in harmony, press the Soma and mix its juice with milk and offer adoration to the gods.

Though the wife was looked upon as inferior to her husband and subject to his will, she enjoyed great liberty, and occupied a position much higher than that which she was allotted in later periods. She participated with her husband in religious ceremonies, accompanied him in wars, and was in charge of the house during peacetime, having the control not only of the servants and the slaves, but also of unmarried brothers and sisters of her husband.

There seems to have been no veil system, and women moved about freely in society. They were fond of ornaments and beautiful bright clothes. The Aryans of this early age were usually monogamous, though polygamy was not unknown, especially among the rich and princely classes. The standard of morality was fairly high. Adultery and rape were counted among the most serious offences, and were severely dealt with, while illegitimate births were often concealed to avoid shame.

As the family could only be continued in the male line, and because the early Aryans were having constant wars with their

neighbours, abundance of sons was always prayed for, and a newly-wedded husband hoped that his wife would become the mother of heroes. Lack of sons was placed on the same level as poverty, and adoption was regarded as a mere makeshift. No desire for the birth of a daughter is ever expressed in the Rigveda. Even to have a daughter was looked upon as misery.

The Aryans were essentially a democratic people. The chief (*visapati*) was generally elected in a tribal assembly (*samiti*), and was helped by a council of elders (*sabha*). Even when a chief enjoyed hereditary rights and was vested with supreme power, he was never an absolute ruler, nor did he exceed his authority. In times of national emergency, the chief had the supreme command of all the forces, while at other times his power was subject to the common law and tradition, which he could not override.

It is noteworthy that the Aryans at this time had no temples, no idols, and no priestly class ; each family patriarch could perform these duties himself by lighting the sacred fire on his own hearth. He could offer milk, animals or libations of Soma to the fire, and he could invoke the gods' blessings, health and wealth for himself and for the members of his family. Some of the chiefs had priests (*purohita*) to perform sacrifices on their behalf, but there was no royal caste and no separate priestly class. Men did not retire into forests to subject themselves to penance or mortification. The *Rishis* (learned wise men) were worldly people who tilled their lands or reared their cattle at the time of peace and during wars would take up arms to fight the enemy.

*The Arts of peace.*—The Aryans lived mostly in houses of wood and felt (like the Afghan Kochis of today), which could be folded and transported from place to place. They were versed in the art of spinning and weaving and had an adequate knowledge of working in metals. Clothes were usually woven of sheep's wool, often variegated in colour and sometimes even adorned with gold. Women often plaited their hair, while men ususally oiled and combed it.

Goldsmiths and carpenters were held in high esteem, The chief ornaments were necklaces, bracelets, anklets and earings, which were worn by both men and women. On festive days wreaths of flowers were profusely used. Growing beards was a common fashion though shaving was occasionally practised.

The chief articles of food was milk, which was either taken raw, or was mixed with grain or Soma. Grain was eaten after being parched or ground into flour between millstones. It was then made into cakes by mixing it with butter. Though to a large extent vegetarians, these early Aryans did not hesitate to eat meat, especially on ceremonial occasions. Bulls were the chief offerings to the gods, and beef was probably the kind of meat most frequently taken. Horse-flesh must have been less commonly used, owing to the comparative rarity of the horse-sacrifice. Meat was either roasted on spits or cooked in pots. The latter were made of metal or earthenware, but drinking vessels were usually of wood.*

The Rigvedic Aryans were acquainted with at least two kinds of liquor. Soma was the chief one, but because it was costly, its use was restricted to religious functions. The genuine Soma plant from which it was made became increasingly difficult to obtain as the Aryans moved farther away from their original home. The spirit in ordinary use was called Sura. The knowledge of it goes back to a remote period, for its name, like that of Soma, is found in the Avesta in the form of Hura. It was probably prepared from some kind of grain. Indulgence in Sura went hand-in-hand with gambling.

The principal means of livelihood was cattle-breeding, though the art of agriculture was not unknown to the Aryans of this age, and they took with them to India a rich variety of agricultural resources, such as millet, barley, wheat and oil-seeds. They also practised hunting wild animals to a great extent. The hunters used bows and arrows, traps and snares. Birds were generally caught by nets spread on the ground. Some animals were caught by the help of trained dogs.

*A History of Sanskrit Literature, by A. A. Macdonnel, p. 164.

Trade and other commercial transactions were carried on by barter system; the chief articles of exchange being domestic animals and their products. A considerable advance was made with the manufacture of arms and weapons, such as the bow and arrow, spear, lance, sword and slingstone. The arrows were usually furnished with poisonous tips. The warrior fought to the accompaniment of war-cries and the music of drums.

The horse was greatly valued and harnessed to a chariot, which bore the warrior to the field of battle. Chariot races were also very common and a favourable amusement. Among other social recreation was gambling with dice, but how it was played we do not know. Dancing seems to have been indulged in both by men and women and usually took place in the open air. The Aryans were acquainted with different kinds of musical instruments, such as the drum, flute and lute. That they were fond of music can be deduced from the statement of a Rishi who says, "The sound of the flute is heard in the abode of Yama, where the blessed dwell."

The hearth was the centre of domestic life. Dwellings were mostly of timber, rectangular and thatched. There were also assembly halls from which women were excluded when the menfolk transacted business or gambled. Temples did not exist as specialized structures. The Aryans generally buried their dead, but cremation was not unknown. There are verses in the Rigveda which refer to the funeral rites of these early Aryans. One hymn relates the entire funeral ceremony of the time when the tribe brings forth its deceased kinsman to restore him to mother earth. Around the grave the friends and relatives of the deceased assemble and commence their wailings; and then from among the throng the cry of the bard goes forth :

> "Go thou now far away, I speak to thee who seeth not, and hearst not; injure thou not our children or our fighting men. These all standing are now separated from thee. We look to dance and singing and thereby wish to lengthen our own days. Let all here live a life of a hundred years. Between those living and him now dead we heap

up stones. Let none advance beyond them. Let first the women not yet widowed, those with noble husbands, go hence, weeping not, towards their houses. Now let the wife of the dead man arise. Let her go to the world of living. Your husband's life is fled, and you are now a widow. Enter, O lifeless one, the mother earth, the widespread earth, soft as a maiden, in her arms rest from sins. Let now the earth close gently around you, even as a mother gently wraps her infant child in soft robes. Let now the fathers keep safe thy resting place, and let Yama, the first mortal who passed the portals of death, prepare for thee an abiding place."

It was believed that those who had done good in this world, those who had performed sacrifices, or had been kind and liberal to others, or were warriors or saints, gained the happy heaven, where dwelt Yama. In the happy afterlife, the body of the deceased, according to these Aryans, though not in the same form which it bore during life, took part in and pined for the funeral oblations. The home of the dead was believed to be at the back of the sky, where there was joy and delight, and attainment of all wishes, and where one dwelt immortal. Another verse tells us that those who have given rich offerings to the priests during their lifetime go to the highest heaven. Those who have given gifts of horses dwell by the sun. Those who have done good deeds have reached the happy shores, where a mead made from honey or Soma awaits them. There also dwell warriors who, in their fight against enemies, have given up their lives, and those who on earth upheld the right.

Heaven, a happy hereafter, was all that was looked forward to by these Rigvedic Aryans. As to the future of the evil-doer and the sinful, there are but faint allusions. In one verse Indra and Soma are invoked to cast the wicked into the depths and darkness from which there is no exit. Again, in another verse, it is said that the deep abyss has been made for those women who wander about doing evil, who deceive their husbands, and are sinful, unrighteous or untruthful.

The Aryans, with this cultural background, emerged from Afghanistan at a time which is much disputed (but which can safely be placed between 3000 B. C. and 1000 B. C.), and slowly made their way to the northern plains of the Indian sub-continent. They had many hard struggles with the aborigines whom they, out of hatred, called barbarians, demons and goblins. It was their god Indra who helped them in defeating the black people and in taking away their lands. This great heroic diety of the conquering Aryans rose to power when the dark-skinned people were driven out from their lands and strongholds—*purs*, as they were called.

The Dasyus (as the aborigines were called) fought valiantly in defence of their homes and herds of cattle and yielded to the superior might of the Aryans only when the destruction of their fortified towns made further resistance futile. The vanquished Dasyus were enslaved and gradually absorbed into the Aryan society as Shudras and as outcastes. But the culture of the conquered affected Aryans civilisation deeply. The non-Aryan influence gradually gained ground until it became almost predominant in popular belief and worship. The simple cult of the Aryans, with its democratic spirit, underwent a great transformation and developed into a religion of complicated rites and superstitions. For the first time we see a new religion taking shape. It created a society dominated by the caste system which gave the Brahmans alone the right of attaining supreme knowledge.

**(b) The Avestic Age :**

Next to the Rigveda, the Avesta is the oldest book illustrating the early life of the Aryans. It is the sacred book of the Zoroastrians (Parsees, Gabers or fireworshippers as they are variously called). Scholars are divided in their opinions as to the exact age of Zoroaster. Similarly we have no definite knowledge about his birthplace. History so far has not been able to fathom these mysteries. That he was a native of Balkh (Bakhdi of Avesta) can be proved by comparing the mythology of the Rigveda with that of the Avesta and also by the names mentioned in these two ancient classics. In the Avesta no mention is

ever made of a Median name, nor of Persian. Even the name of Ecbatana, which was an important spiritual centre of ancient times, is not to be found. The inhabitants are still called Aryans and their country is known by the name of Aryana. The people, like the Aryans of the Rigvedic age, had no money or coins and carried on their transactions by barter system, an exchange of cattle or horses. Like their brethren of the Vedic Age, they are not familiar with the name of salt. Besides, Zoroastrianism has much in common with the Vedic pantheon ; its supreme god, Ahura Mazda, is not very different from the great Asura Varuna. Zoroastrian Mithra answers exactly to the Vedic Mitra. The worship in both systems is centered around the sacred plant (Soma of Rigveda and Homa of the Avesta) and around the sacred fire, Agni and Atar. The mythological struggle between the god of lightning, Indra, and the serpent Ahi, is transferred to Atrar and the Azi. Yama, son of Vivasvat and Tritana relives in Yima, son of Vivanghant and Thraetaona.

Similarly, the language of the Avesta and the Rigveda has much in common, and as Darmesteter puts it, "They are two echoes of one race and the same voice, the reflection of one and the same thought." These facts indicate the probability that both of these cultures developed side by side in one place or in close proximity to each other.

The only work that can difinitely be ascribed to Zoroaster is "the Gathas" (Githa in Sanskrit also means song or verses), which gives a vivid account of his struggle and disappointments and his denunciations of the Kavis (a ruling family of Bactria), and the Kirpans. The "Gathas", the oldest document in the Avesta, bears a strong resemblance to Rigvedic language. It is interesting to note that only recently a Bengali scholar, Jotindra Mohan Chaterjee, made a successful attempt to translate the Gathas into English by applying the rules of Panini's grammar. This attempt has not yet been taken seriously by other scholars, but there can be no doubt that Sanskrit and Avesta are sister languages, pointing to a common origin in some forgotten past, or arising from two kindred cultures.

Now we come to the age of Zoroaster, which is an equally difficult question to decide. The accounts on this subject are so contradictory and confusing that it is not possible to come to a definite conclusion. The Greeks have placed the age of Zoroaster into such remote antiquity as to put it practically beyond the pale of history. Possibly the first historian to speak about Zoroaster is Xanthust (500-450 B. C.), who is the predecessor of Herodotus (484 ?-425 ? B. C.). Copying from him, other histories, like Aristotles and Pliny, have noted that Zoroaster lived some 5000 years before their time. Some modern scholars place his era as late as the sixth century B. C., making him practically a contemporary of the Buddha. But there are reasons to believe that he could not have lived so late as that, and it would be safe to say that he must have lived between 1500-1000 B. C.

Zarathustra, of which Zoroaster is the familiar Greek form, is differently spelt, such as Zartosht, Zargosht, Zarathosht and Zarahusht. The form most commonly used is Zartosht. In the Gathas he is called Zarathustra, and occasionally the family surname, Spitama, is added to it, which apparently means of white descent or race. Zarathustra is composed of two parts, namely Zarat (yellow), and Ushtra (camel), meaning the possessor of a yellow or golden camel. It is said that at the age of twenty Zoroaster retired from ordinary life in search of Truth and was always absorbed in meditation. He is alleged to have received a "divine revelation" at the thirtieth year of his life. In his forty-second year he was able to make king Gashtasp of Bactria a follower of his faith. He died in a fire-temple at Balkh at the hands of a Turanian, named Baratrukrash. It is said that Arjasp, king of the Turanian, led an attack against Gashtasp for the very reason that the king of Bactria had embraced a new faith.*

Zoroaster, in his lifetime, was not very successful in his mission. It is only after his death that his teaching and philosophy found a large number of listeners. In his verses he often complains

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*Introduction to the Gathas, by Poure Davoud, Bombay edition, P. 13

of the opposition that he meets everywhere. In one of them he gives vent to his mental grief in these lines. "To what land shall I betake myself ? Where shall I take refuge ? The leaders and the nobles are deserting me ; the peasants, too, please me not ; nor the rulers, for they side with untruth. What can I do that may please thee, 0 Ahura Mazda ? I cry and complain to thee,0 Ahura Mazda, come to my help as a friend cometh to a friend."

It is, however, quite apparent from the Gathas that Zoroaster was giving his message to a people who believed in a group of gods and attached much importance to blood rites and sacrifices. Zoroaster was indeed first among the Indo-Europeans to establish monotheism and to guide mankind to the Eternal Truth and to the worship of one Supreme Being. At a time when Greece was in her infancy, when Rome was not yet born, and when the rest of Europe led a life of ignorance and superstition, there arose from northern Afghanistan a man of Aryan stock who upheld the banner of truth, entered the field of knowledge and delivered his message of worship of one Supreme God. He asked mankind to shun evil and to follow the three-fold maxim of "pure thoughts, pure words and pure actions—Humta, hukhta and huvarasta."

His doctrine is considered to be the first profound factor in the realm of thought. He speaks of the eternal relation of reality to goodness, which he thinks it is impossible to achieve unless human thoughts are free from superstitions. He believes that the human mind can find its way to salvation only with the aid of the pure light of thought. He recognizes freedom of action and believes that man is absolutely free to choose between right and wrong.

The Gathas sought to deal with the problem of evil thought through the doctrine of twin spirits, Spenta Mainyu (the holy spirit of goodness) and Angra Mainyu (Ahriman of evil spirit), which gave rise to the popular conception of dualism. Black is linked to white and darkness to light. The misery and woe, the evil and harm which befall a man while passing through life cannot be attributed to the Divine of Holy Essence of Ahura Mazda, but are definitely the works of the evil spirit. The world

is like the eternal fighting ground between good and evil. The cherished desire and ideal of every person must be to overpower the spirit of evil and to make the spirit of goodness and truth victorious forever. Zoroaster lays great stress on fighting misery, combating disease and famine and making the land prosperous by hard labour and cultivation. He is against the wandering life of the nomads, and wishes men to engage themselves in a settled life and to pursue useful arts and crafts. Similarly, he is vehemently opposed to the use of sacrifices and of alcoholic drinks.

Zoroastrianism underwent a great change in the course of time and gradually became dualistic. The purity of soul which Zoroaster had laid so much stress came to be reduced merely to the ceremonial acts of the priests (*Moubeds*, as they were called). This decadent phase of Zoroastrianism is enshrined in a work called "Vi-daevo-dato", popularly known as Vendidad. For centuries this work has been looked upon by orthodox Zoroastrians as a sacred book, though it constitutes only the main basis of the ceremonial portion relating to the disposal of the dead on the *Dokhma* or the Tower of Silence. The idea is that, since earth is sacred, a corpse should not be buried ; since fire is sacred, a corpse should not be burnt ; and as water is sacred, a corpse should not be thrown into a river. Hence, it was commanded that corpses should be exposed on mountain tops where they could be devoured by vultures and other wild beasts and animals. Later on it became customary to have enclosed towers (Dokhmas), open to the sky, where dead bodies could be exposed to wild birds.

For ages the songs and prayers of the Avesta were handed down from generation to generation by rote, as was the custom of the Rigvedic Aryans, until at last they were recorded in writing in an Aryan alphabet. The word *Avesta* is generally used in conjunction with the word *Zend*, forming the compound Zend-Avesta. This is indeed a very improper designation, as *Zend* means a "commentary or explanation" and was applied only to the explanatory text to the translation of Avesta. Avesta,

from the old Persian *abasta*, meaning "law", is the proper name of the original text.

Avesta is divided into two parts. The first part, or the Avesta proper, contains the Vendidad, the Visperad and the Yasna. The Vendidad is a compilation of religious laws concerning ceremonies and of mythical tales ; the Visperad is a collection of litanies for the sacrifices ; and the Yasna is composed of litanies of the same kind and of five hymns, or Gathas, written in a special dialect, older than the general language of the Avesta.

The second part, known generally as the Khord-Avesta or Small Avesta, is composed of short prayers, which are recited not only by the priests, but by all the faithful at certain moments of the day, month or year, and in the presence of different elements.

The most ancient portions of the Avesta are the Gathas, which are held in great reverence as being the pronouncements of Zoroaster himself. These songs are possessed of great beauty and eloquence. Zoroaster, referring to this, says : "The one person who knows and appreciates the religion of Ahura Mazda is Zarathustra himself. He will spread the religion of Truth, O Mazda, therefore, grant him the charms of sweet speech."

The Avesta sufferred a terrible catastrophe during the fourth century B. C., when Alexander the Great set fire to the royal palace of the Achaemenian kings at Persipolis and burnt to ashes some 12,000 hides on which this religious scripture was inscribed. It is alleged that the Avesta of the Achaemenian period contained 815 chapters and was divided into 21 volumes (or *nasks*). In the Sassanian time, when the scattered parts of the Avesta were gathered together, only 348 chapters could be found, which were again divided into 21 *nasks*, containing 345, 700 words. Of this lot, today an Avesta of 83,000 words is available, the rest having been lost beyond recovery in the flood of destruction caused by the wild Mongolian hordes of Gengiz Khan* in the early part of the thirteenth century.

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*Differently spelt ; Changiz Khan, Genghis Khan, Jenghis Khan, Jenghiz Khan and Gengez Khan, 1162-1227, Mongol conqueror of most of Asia and of east Europe to the Dnieper river.

CHAPTER IV

# THE GREAT EPIC AGE

In addition to its real history, Afghanistan has a legendary history, based mostly on the Rigveda, the Avesta and several other epic poems. A careful study of this legendary history enables one to glean some important and interesting information about the cultural development of the country in the pre-historic age. A knowledge of this legendary history also helps one to understand the folklore and the literature of Afghanistan, in which frequent references are made to this period.

According to tradition, three important dynasties ruled in Bactria, one after the other, *viz*; the Pishdadian, the Kavas and the Aspas. Yama (Yima of the Avesta), popularly known as Jamshid of the Divine Lustre, is looked upon by some as the real founder of the Pishdadian dynasty and as the king who laid the foundation of Bakhdi (or Balkh), the first city of the Aryans and the capital of Bactria, which continued for several centuries to be the seat of these early kings.

Tradition has it that Jamshid was crowned by a phoenix. He was a happy and a glorious king and in his reign, which was a long one, there was neither poverty nor scarcity, neither disease nor death. It is said that he was offered the task of proclaiming the Sacred Law, but he refused the offer on the ground that the time was not opportune for such a move. This task was therefore left to Zoroaster. It is alleged that Jamshid was constantly in touch with Ahura Mazda, who gave him a golden rod and a golden plough. The first of these gifts served him as an emblem of sovereignty, while the second helped him in teaching his people the art of agriculture. He also taught his men the arts of planting trees, digging canals, irrigating lands

and domesticating animals. The result was that people multiplied and increased to such an extent that the earth had to be expanded three times its original size to accommodate the surplus population.

At the end of Jamshid's long and glorious reign, Ahura Mazda announced to him that a severe winter was approaching, that heavy snow would fall, and that terrible floods would cover the face of the earth. He was, therefore, advised to make a square enclosure (Vara or citadel) for himself, and therein to preserve the sacred fire, fine pairs of animals, seeds of the fairest trees and plants and a good number of tall handsome men and women with sufficient quantities of food to eat. He was also to stay inside the citadel until the storm was over.

Jamshid, following these instructions, built a beautiful castle for himself at Bakhdi. He then took shelter in it with all the living animals and choicest seeds as he was advised to do, until the deluge subsided and the land reappeared. He then came out of his stronghold and repeopled the earth with his faithful folk.

It is then related that towards the close of his reign Jamshid's good fortune and success made him proud and forgetful of Ahura Mazda. He began to think that he himself was god, and he demanded that divine homage be paid to him. The Divine Glory, which had accompanied him so far, left him. He was no longer worthy to rule his people, and his kingdom fell into the hands of Dahak, from whose shoulders had grown two snakes which had to be fed each day with human brains.

Poor Jamshid, leaving his motherland, took shelter with Kureng, the king of Zabul (the old name for the district of Ghazni), and married his daughter. From this marriage sprang the line of Rustam, the legendary hero of Seistan. It is related that one of Jamshid's descendants from this new wife was Garshasp, the father of Neriman, whose son was Sam. This Sam had a son, Zal by name, who, during his long wanderings, once came to Kabul. Mihrab, the king of Kabul, received him

warmly. Zal, during his stay there, fell in love with Rudabeh, the king's daughter. Their son was Rustam, the hero of Herculean strength.

The Pishdadians were followed by the Kianids or Kavas. The first king of this line was Kava Kovata (popularly known as Kai Kubad), who also made Balkh the seat of his government. He reigned gloriously and was able to vanquish the Turanian hordes with the help of Rustam. Kai Khusro (or Kava Husrava) is perhaps the last king of this line. He, too, was a great king and an able administrator, and with the help of Rustam was able to annihilate the Turanians, whose king Afrasiab was taken prisoner and put to death.

The third and last legendary dynasty is known by the name of Aspa. It was founded by Lohraspa (the lord of swift-footed horses). He, too, had his capital at Balkh, where he set up a new temple. Lengend here comes close to history. Towards the close of his reign Lohraspa, handing over the reigns of his kingdom to Gashtasp, his eldest son, retired to his temple. It was during the reign of Gashtasp (about 1000 B. C.) that legend places the death of Zarathustra Spitama. The king, his queen, Hutaosa, together with a large number of his nobles and courtiers, embraced the new faith, and took a keen interest in its propagation.

The last king of this line was Spintoo, entitled "The Wise". He was a great king and made his power felt as far as the valleys of the Arghandab and the Helmand. After him, for a period of five hundred years, the history of Aryana is blank. With the exception of one or two events, more legendary than historical in character, which can be gleaned from the accounts of Greek writers, the very names of the kings of this long period are almost unknown to us. The first occasion on which Aryana enters actual history is at the time when Bactria was invaded by Ninus, king of Assyria, with an army said to be 2,000,000 foot and horse and charioteers.

Oxyartes, king of Bactria, at the head of a large force (some 400,000 strong) made a heroic stand against this formidable

army, and had some initial successes. But in the end the tide of battle turned against him and the assailants, being re-enforced, were able to push him back. The Bactrians, falling back, took refuge in their citadel, where they were besieged by the invading force. The city was strongly and vigorously defended ; and Ninus, despairing of success, was about to call a retreat. At this time, Semiramis, a lady of exceptional beauty and courage, who had accompanied her husband, Menon, an officer in the Assyrian army, proposed a plan of attack by which the city was taken. Her share in the exploit introduced her to the emperor, and she became his queen and successor.

It so happened that Aryana, favoured by being an inaccessible mountain fastness, soon recovered its independence, which continued until Cyrus the Great of Persia came to power.

The second time when Aryana is mentioned in the accounts of these classical writers is at the time of Tiglath-Pilser (745-727 B. C.). From one of his inscriptions discovered at Chalah we learn that he was able to extend his influence in the east to Arakutti, which is Arakosia or Arachosia, the country watered by the Arghandab and the Helmand. It appears that the Assyrian supremacy was shaken off shortly afterwards, and the country lapsed into anarchy. It was divided into a number of petty independent states when, in the middle of the 6th century B. C., Cyrus the Great invaded Aryana and was able to lay his hands on the western portion of the country.

Chapter V

# THE GRAECO-BACTRIAN PERIOD

The civil wars, which were frequent in Aryana, together with feudalism, eventually made the country an easy prey to foreign aggression. The Persians who, under their great leader, Cyrus, had by the middle of the 6th century B. C. succeeded in extending their western boundary as far as the Mediterranean Sea, took advantage of the anarchy prevailing in Afghanistan. Though devoid of political unity or a central government, Afghanistan offered very stiff resistance; and it took the invaders five long years to reduce a portion of the country. Ctesias says that the Bactrians were among the best soldiers of the East, and that when Cyrus advanced into their country, they made a heroic stand. Several indecisive battles were fought, and the Bactrians were not reduced by force.

Very little is known of the political and social conditions in Aryana during this period until the beginning of the 4th century B. C. In accordance with the Persian practice the country was divided into different satrapies or provinces, each under a governor known as a satrap. It appears that the local chiefs retained their independence to a large extent; even the administration of the country was mostly in the hands of these landlords. The Persians made full use of the experience and knowledge of the people of Aryana, who, according to Herodotus, were better acquainted with the administrative machinery of their own country than were the Persians. However, feudalism still existed, and the local chiefs, who were not content with foreign rule, revolted again and again.

During this period official business was transacted in a script known as Kharoshti, derived from the Aramaic script. Money

of gold and silver, bearing the image of the Persian king, who was represented as hastening through his dominions with bow and spear, came into circulation. But here, too, local custom was tolerated, and strips of silver stamped with a variety of local devices were likewise used as currency.

During this period some Greek writers came to Afghanistan and a few even passed through the country on their way to India. A Greek named Skylax, during the reign of Darius Hystaspis, came as far as Gandhara and navigated the Indus in 509 B. C. He is said to have travelled in India also. From his account various other Greeks writers, among them Herodotus, derived their information about Aryana and India.

In the year 480 B. C., the armed might of Persia was led forth by King Xerxes to conquer the Hellenic world. The defeat of this vast host by the Greeks lies outside the scope of this history, but it is of interest because it marks the beginning of the decline of the Persian power. Exactly a century and a half later the palm of political leadership passed on to the Greeks and Macedonians who, under Alexander the Great, invaded the Persian Empire, took Persepolis and set it on fire. In a few hours the royal palace and archives, including the sacred books of the Zoroastrians, were reduced to ashes.

Darius III, the last king of the line, took shelter in northern Afghanistan. Alexander, after assuming the denomination of the Great King, set out from the Persian capital to pursue the fugitive monarch into Afghan territory. It was here that he met the stiffest resistance of his military career. Everywhere in his line of advance, fighting was of exceptional ferocity. Even though Afghanistan, at the time of Alexander's invasion, had no political unity and was in a condition of internal discord, weakness and chaos, it took the proud conqueror four to five years (331-327 B. C.) to break the isolated resistance of these warlike tribes.

By the end of 327 B. C., Alexander's troops entered the plain of Peshawar and occupied the local metropolis, Pushkalavati (the Greek Peukelaotis, modern Charsada), near the

confluence of the Kabul and the Indus rivers. A few months later a wooden bridge was built across the Indus and a few galleys were provided to assist in the ferrying. In the early dawn, one day in the spring of 326 B. C., the crossing of the river began. We are not much concerned with Alexander's wars with Indian princes. A series of successful engagements brought the Greek army to the river Beas (the Hyphasis of the Greeks). On its banks, the battle-weary soldiery refused to follow their leader any more in distant countries. Alexander was forced to call a halt. Altars were built and sacrifices offered to the gods. Then, at the end of July, 326 B. C., Alexander decided to return. On reaching the Jhelum he made up his mind to descend the river-system and to make his way westward along the Persian Gulf. The fleet floated down the great rivers to the ancient delta at the head of which stood the city of Pattala, somewhere near modern Hyderabad. Here the fleet under Nearchus continued its voyage along the sea-shore, while Alexander himself marched with a division of his troops through the arid wastes of Mekran, and ultimately, after suffering great hardships, reached Babylon (324 B. C.). His mind was still occupied with vast plans, and he wanted to make that city the capital of his far-flung empire, but he died shortly afterwards (June 28, 323 B. C.).

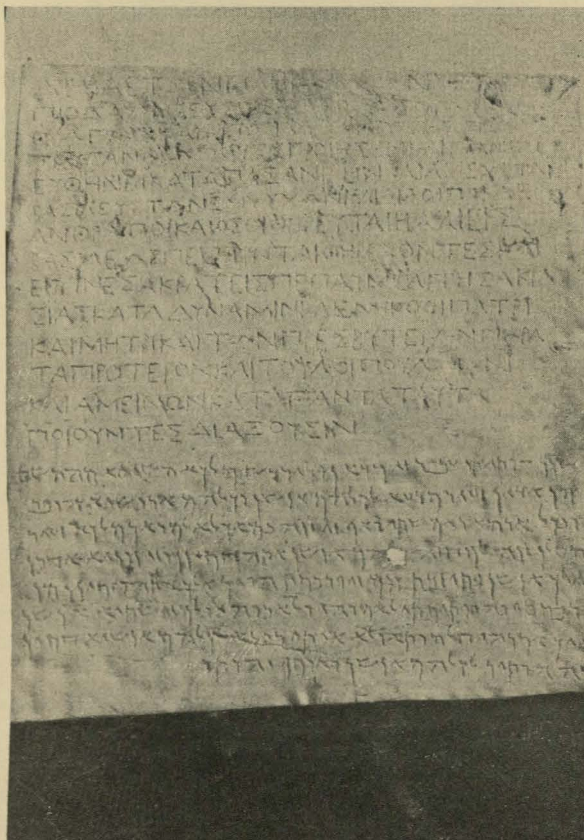
Alexander's conquests were short-lived ; like a meteor he came and vanished and hardly had time to consolidate the vast empire which he had conquered by his sword within the short space of ten years. Nevertheless, his conquests constituted one of the greatest achievements in military history. He sprinkled Greek or semi-Greek cities (polis, as they were called) over the territories traversed by him. Most of the cities founded by him disappeared soon after his departure, while others survived precariously. A few prospered, though with dwindling Greek influence. In Afghanistan itself, Alexander founded three cities—Alexandria Arius (modern Herat), Alexandria Arachosia (Kandahar), and Alexandria ad Caucasum (modern Charikar or somewhere near it). Of these the last one had a better luck. But Alexander's exploits had some other useful results. They

paved the way for the exchange of knowledge and the circulation of ideas between the East and the West, which has continued to increase down to the present time. Moreover, they encouraged trade between Asia and the Western countries.

Alexander left no issue ; Roxana, his queen and the daughter of a Bactrian noble, was pregnant at the time of his death. Pending the birth of an heir, Perdiccas, one of the generals, to whom Alexander had given his signet-ring on his deathbed, was chosen regent. But now that the grip of the master hand was felt no more, the ambitious generals of the deceased monarch could not be kept together, and consequently a civil war broke out. The contest for power was a long one and it was not until 306 B. C., that Seleucus Nicator (the Conqueror), one of the youngest generals, emerged victorious as the ruler of Alexander's empire in the East. Meanwhile, great changes had come to pass in the Greek satrapies in Aryana as well as India.

In northern India a certain low-born Hindu named Chandra-Gupta (Sandrakotto or Sandrokyptos of the Greek), by force and intrigues was able to lay the foundation of a powerful empire extending from the Indus to Pataliputra in Bihar. The Mauryan dynasty, thus founded, was destined to last for 137 years (315-178 B. C), and was the largest hitherto known in India. In about 305 B. C., when Seleucus made an attempt to repeat the exploits of Alexander the Great in India, on crossing the Indus he was surprised to see the large host arrayed against him and led by Chandragupta himself. Seleucus, realizing the futility of his campaign, was shrewd enough to come to terms with his formidable opponent. In return for a face-saving gift of 500 elephants, he surrendered the Greek lands up to the foot of the Hindu Kush,* and is also said to have given his daughter in marriage to the Indian emperor.

*This part of Aryana, comprising the satrapies of Aeria, Arachosia and Gandhara, remained in the possession of the Mauryans for about a century. It was during the reign of Asoka, grandson of Chandragupta, that Buddhism found its way into southern and eastern Afghanistan, and became one of the important religions of the country until the advent of Islam.



*Asoka's bilingual inscription discovered recently at Kandahar.*

In Aryana Alexander had appointed a certain Philip to govern both Bactria and Sogdonia. In 321 B. C., Philip was transferred to Parthia, and Satasana, a Cypriot, was appointed in his place. Meanwhile, tremendous changes were coming to pass in the social life of the country. The Greeks who had settled in Bactria intermarried with local elements. Although they had not forgotten their traditions, they had to a large extent identified themselves with the local population in their social and political life. In the face of the perpetual menace from the northern nomads and bordering powers, the Greeks were forced to make a common cause with the Bactrians, for

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Under the patronage of Asoka (273-232 B. C.), who became a convert to Buddhism and repented bitterly of the carnage involved in the conquest of Kalinga, Buddhism became widespread. Crossing the border of the Indian sub-continent, it reached the foot of the Hindu Kush.

Asoka's orders and admonitions to his subjects were carved in stones, columns and rocks. One of these inscriptions, bilingual in character (Greek-Aramaic), was discovered in Afghanistan only recently. The inscription is engraved on a block of stone $2\frac{1}{2} \times 1$ metre in size and is a part of the mountain near the old city of Kandahar, which was destroyed by Nadir Shah of Persia in 1738. The block, brought to light accidently, is an oblong mass of limestone covered by a compact dark-grey coating of basalt. It is an irregular tablet, a few centimeters deep, the edges being roughly carved. Only a part of the tablet, (height 55 cm. width 45 cm. to 50 cm.) is occupied by the inscription. The Greek text, which occupies the upper part of written surface, consists of thirteen and a half lines, of uneven length, with a space of one cm. between the lines. The paleographic examination shows that the inscription dates back approximately to the 3rd century B. C. The text is fairly well preserved, except for some short gaps in the first three lines.

The Aramaic text, separated from the Greek by an interlinear space of two cm., is excellently preserved; only a few small cracks, which, however, do not interfere with the reading, cross the last three lines of the text. It extends over seven and a half lines.

In this inscription, Asoka is called Piodasses, who, in his capacity as a ruler, calls upon his subjects to abstain from harming living beings; his desire being that "hunters and fishermen cease their sinful activities". The inscription ends with the wish that his subjects comply with the rules and be obedient to their parents and old men.

they fully knew that without their co-operation they would not be able to hold their own against these menacing powers. It was apparent from the very beginning that the successors of Alexander in the east, the Seleucids, were too busy at home to control the Bactrian Greeks for a long time. Similarly, the Bactrian Greeks knew that they could not expect any substantial help from that quarter and they must appeal to the national sentiments of their own subjects, and take them into partnership. By the middle of the 3rd century B. C., Bactria began to break loose from the Seleucid empire, and was heading towards the establishment of a national government. Diodotus, satrap of Bactria-Sogdonia, who had the full support of the Bactrian themselves, revolted against Antiochus II in about 250 B. C. It is not known precisely whether he took the royal title, but his son, Diodotus II, certainly struck coins in his name and assumed the royal designation. Reversing his father's policy, he allied himself with Thridates, king of Parthia, the enemy of Seleucids.

Diodotus I, it is said, had two wives; one the mother of Diodotus II, and the other a princess of the Seleucid family. From this second queen Diodotus had a daughter, who was married to Euthydemus, governor of Sogdonia. A conspiracy was formed by the latter with the help of his mother-in-law, which resulted in the death of Diodotus II and in the usurpation of the throne (about 227 B.C.).

The story of Greek-Bactria covers to a large extent the reigns of Euthydemus and his eldest son, Demetrius. A fine portrait of Euthydemus, preserved in the Torlonia Museum of Rome, shows clearly the strength of the man towards the close of his life.

The internal dissensions of the Graeco-Bactrians gave the Seleucids a chance to turn their attention to the east once more. In about 212 B. C., Antiochus II appeared in Parthia at the head of a large force. Artabanes, king of Parthia, was defeated and was forced to sue for peace. Antiochus had now time to turn his attention towards Bactria (208 B. C.). Euthydemus

tried in vain to check his progress at the Arius (Harirud) with 10,000 Bactrian horse. In one of the skirmishes, Antiochus was wounded in the mouth, but in the night attack that immediately followed this incident, the Bactrians, being out-numbered and out-manoeuvred, had to fall back to their capital where they valiantly withstood a prolonged siege of more than two years. Euthydemus had turned Bactria into one of the greatest fortified places ever known. Consequently, Antiochus failed to take the city by force, and was ultimately obliged to come to terms with the besieged. Euthydemus wisely threatened to call the Sakas to his help if Antiochus continued the siege or if he persisted in his demand of unconditional surrender. Both parties agreed to settle their differences by peaceful means. Euthydemus gave some of his war-elephants to Antiochus, who, on his part, promised to give his daughter in marriage to Demetrius.

After the departure of the invading force, Euthydemus found time to develop his kingdom. By this time Asoka, the Mauryan king, was dead ; and Euthydemus wanted to avail himself of the political chaos raging south of the Hindu Kush. With the help of his energetic son, Demetrius, he was able to push his frontiers forward and to occupy the whole of southern Aryana as far as Aeria, Arachosia, Seistan and Carmania (Kirman). With Seistan in his hands, he acquired a number of important routes ; one going eastward by Kandahar to the lower Indus Valley, the second going northeastward by Ghazni and Kabul to the Paropamisadae (modern Kohdaman), where it joined the main Bactria-Capisa-Taxila route ; the third leading northward to Herat and Merv and across the Oxus to Sogdiana ; and two others to the west, one via the land route to Persepolis, Susa, Seleucia, Babylonia, and the other to the Gulf of Ormuz.

In the east, Euthydemus extended his empire to the Seres and Phrni (probably Kashghar and Yarkand). As a result of this conquest, nickel began to pour into Bactria. The Chinese were at this time acquainted with several kinds of alloys, one of these being nickel, which they called "white copper." At this time there was no direct route with China. Caravans from China

direct to Bactria and Parthia started only in 106 B. C., as a consequence of Chang K'ien's mission to these countries. Such exports from China as reached Greek-Bactria at this stage had to pass from one people to another. In this way nickel came to this country along with Chinese bamboo and some cloth.

Euthydemus was not only a great conqueror, he was also an efficient administrator and a very capable ruler. Under his sway Aryana reached a peak of prosperity such as it had never before experienced. In addition to commerce, agriculture received a great impetus at this time by the digging of new canals. Euthydemus' reign must have been a long one, as an abundance of coins bears testimony to this fact.

He was succeeded by his eldest son, Demetrius, who, like his father, was an energetic ruler and a fine administrator. On coming to the throne in about 189 B. C., he made up his mind to follow in the footsteps of Alexander the Great, whom he looked upon not only as his ancestor but his model as well. He wanted to repeat his exploits in India and execute the plan which that great conqueror had been unable to complete. After crossing the Indus, he took the proud title of "Invincible," which appears on his rare bilingual copper coins. It is said that when Alexander visited the oracle Delphi, the Pythia hailed him as "invincible," and this story must have inspired Demetrius' dream and his claim to that title. He wore the symbol of Alexander's power and he strove to become a second Alexander.

Within the short space of ten years, Demetrius, with the help of his brother, Appolodotus, and Menander, one of his ablest generals, was able to push his frontiers as far as Sindh, Kathiawar and Pataliputra. His empire now extended from the Jaxartes in the north to the Gulf of Cambay in the south, and from Merv to the Ganges. On his coins Demetrius wears the head of an elephant with its trunk as a head dress, a symbol of his Indian conquests.

But his very success in so many directions ultimately proved his undoing. The centre of his activities was now shifted from

Bactria to northern India, and this naturally gave his rivals and enemies a chance to take advantage of his long absence in distant lands. He was at Mathura when the news was brought to him that a popular uprising had been formed against him at Bactria, headed by Eucratides and instigated by the Seleucids. Demetrius ordered Menander to abandon Pataliputra and come to his help, while he himself hurried with all the forces available to Bactria to meet Eucratides.

Details of this conflict are still unavailable, but it is certain that most of the Greek settlers and nobility in Bactria turned against Demetrius and joined hands with his opponents simply because they did not like his pro-native policy. Seeing that the game was lost, Demetrius fell back towards his base. We do not know when and how he met his death, but it is clear that he did not live long after the fall of Bactria.

Eucratides, on ascending the throne of Bactria, celebrated his victory by founding a new city bearing his own name, Eucratideia, and by striking the largest Greek gold coin ever made. He also adopted the title of "great king." Unfortunately, he too was dicontent with the possession of Aryana alone, and like his predecessors, was soon lured by the fertile plains of northern India, which ultimately proved his undoing. Menander, who for reasons unknown, could not come to the help of Demetrius in time, by now had consolidated his position in India. When Eucratides advanced to meet him, Menander was able to inflict a crushing defeat on him which made him sue for peace.

It was at this juncture that Mithridates I of Parthia, flushed with the conquest of Media and encouraged by the defeat of Eucratides in India, invaded Bactria at the head of a large force. Eucratides, with his energies exhausted and his resources drained, was not in a position to stem the surging tide of the Parthians. Hurriedly collecting a force, he left for the north to meet the invaders. His sudden death at this critical juncture enabled the Parthians to lay their hands on some of the richest provinces in the northwest of the country.

Helioclies, Eucratide's son and successor, was the last Graeco-Bactrian to rule over Bactria. Hemmed in by the Parthians on the west, and exposed to the constant invasions of the barbarians from the north, he was at last forced to give up all his territories north of the Hindu Kush. Leaving Bactria, probably in 135 B. C., he came to Capisa, where he succeeded in laying the foundation of a small kingdom, which was destined to endure, with fluctuating fortune, until the beginning of the first century A. D. The last king of the line was apparently Harmaeus, some of whose coins also bear the name of Kajula Kadphises, the first Kushan king, which indicates an intermediary phase of dual control.

CHAPTER VI

# DEVELOPMENT OF GRAECO-BACTRIAN CULTURE

It is rather unfortunate that most of the writings dealing with this important phase of Afghan history are lost. Of this important period, extending for no less than two centuries, nothing has so far come down to us directly with the exception of coins and some fragments and scattered notices preserved in the books of later writers, such as Strabo, Trogus, Justin, Plutarch and Ptolemy. And there is not much that can be gleaned from the indigenous literature, inscriptions or archaeological research. Though a brief Chinese account is available and is of much value but China entered the field very late and did not come into direct contact with Aryana until the rule of these Graeco-Bactrian kings was practically over north of the Hindu Kush. The ruins and mounds scattered over the face of the Bactrian plains are supposed to contain rich reminiscences of this period, and when properly excavated may yield hidden treasures that will be of great help in understanding the highly developed culture that flourished at this period of Afghan history.

**Graeco-Bactrian Coins.**

Fortunately, as we said above, the Bactrian kings left quite a large number of coins, which, with their exquisite portraitures, bear eloquent witness to the vitality of the state and the artistic taste of these rulers. These coins show little deterioration down to Yueh-chi's conquest of northern Afghanistan, when the famous school of Bactrian artists and engravers was literally wiped out.

The portraits on the coins struck in Bactria at this period are, indeed, fine works of art. Three of them, representing the heads of kings, those of Euthydemus in old age; of his illustrious

son, Demetrius, in the prime of life, wearing the elephant scalp; and of a certain Antimachus, wearing a flat Kausia, are marvelous. It is admitted that Greek art has bequeathed to the world nothing finer than these coins. It is also alleged that these three coins are the work of one man and that only a small amount of time could have elapsed between their manufacture.

The coinage of Graeco-Bactrian kings remained fine to the end, and then the Bactrian artists vanished and no trace of their peculiar skill in portraiture is found anywhere. Probably wars destroyed most of the Bactrin aristocracy, and the few who survived this catastrophe had to seek shelter in distant parts of the country—in the high valleys, beyond the reach of the invaders. Some of these petty chiefs seem to have lingered for a time. Although Greek art and the Greek language suffered a lot in Aryana, the Greek way of life and script lasted for a much longer period. The Kushan language was transcribed into Greek writing, and even their coins for a considerable time were more or less poor imitation of Greek coins.

**Administration and Policy.**

The Graeco-Bactrian kings divided the country into a number of satrapies, each under a separate satrap (or governor). Their kingdom, as long as they had their hold on Bactria, played a great role in shielding the civilized world from the wild tribes inhabiting the northern steppes from the plains of the Danube to the Jaxartes—a reservoir of people which seemed to be inexhaustible. These people were called by the general name of Sakas (Sacas) though the Greek writers called them Scythians.

The foremost concern of every Greek king of Bactria was to hold the gateway of Iran as well as of India against the barbarians of the north and northwest, a task which they admirably accomplished until the great upheaval of these peoples came, which was caused by the migration of the Yueh-chi, which pushed the Sakas onward towards Aryana. The pressure upon Bactria came from two directions; from the north, across the Jaxartes, and from the northwest following the line of the Oxus. Alexander the Great in his march against these tribes, was ultimately forced to

build a number of fortified places to check their onflow towards Aryana. This policy was strictly followed by the Graeco-Bactrian kings, who not only maintained these forts, but also added to them.

From the very beginning, the Greek settlers in Aryana knew that without the active co-operation of the local people they could in no way stem the tide of these ruthless marauders, who were ready to pounce upon Aryana at the first opportunity. Contrary to the policy of the Seleucids, who wanted to Hellenize the Asians, these Bactrian kings, who were farsighted, tried to win the people over to their side and to make common cause with them against the enemy. With this in view, the Greeks allowed the Bactrians much freedom in their domestic affairs.

Though in theory these Greek kings of Aryana were autocrats, they could hardly afford to ride roughshod over established laws and traditions, and the popularity of the dynasty shows that they had no need to rule with an iron hand. The king was the commander of the army, the head of the state, the fountain of law, and the one who stood above the clashes of nationality and creed of the people over which he ruled. It was traditional among the kings of this line to respect and even to be helpful to the various religions of their people.

The basis of the Greek settlements in Aryana was the military colonies planted for the first time by Alexander the Great at strategic points. Tradition has it that he founded no less than seventy military cantonments, but of these comparatively few can be identified. A military colony was settled either with regular troops or with mercenaries or with local people able and willing to serve loyally. Each settler received a *cleros*, a piece of land which carried with it the obligation to serve in the army when called upon.

The primary object of a colony was defence, and most of them were located along the northern frontier, to protect against the nomads. These cantonments were walled and properly fortified. They were planned structures and each had a written charter.

Greek was the official language, though in some of these colonies Greeks themselves were in a minority.

The ultimate aim of every colony was to become a full polis, a city, not necessarily of Greek nationality but of Greek organization and civic form. There was a steady development of these colonies into polis, and it was this trend which, before the end of the 2nd century B. C., had filled Aryana with Greek cities. It is rather difficult to define the minimum distinction which existed between a military colony and a polis, though the significant difference was the greater autonomy of the latter. Each polis had a council, an assembly, an elected magistracy, almost certainly a gymnasium and sometimes a stadium too. Only the king had the right to enlarge a colony and finally to convert it into a polis. Games, matches and tournaments were part of the ordinary life of the citizens. Great importance was attached to physical exercise. The gymnasium was the centre of both the physical and the intellectual training of the masses.

All the Greek polis contained a considerable number of non-Greek elements. Greek was the official langugage even when the settlers were mostly Asians. Decrees were passed in Greek; even the names of local places and gods were Hellenized. As time went on and new cities came into being, the Greeks were compelled to allow a larger number of the indigenous population to live with them. The Greek magistrate no doubt acted for all the communities. The non-Greeks were also subject to the city law. The Greek cities stood for law as opposed to military force. Throughout this period the Greek polis admitted a large number of non-Greeks to citizenship, both out of necessity and as a matter of policy. But they kept the citadel entirely in their own hands, which of course gave them efficient control over the city and a refuge in time of danger.

**Social Life.**

The excavation of some of the sites occupied by the Graeco-Bactrian polis will undoubtedly throw some light on the social life of the country at that remote time and on the extent to which the Bactrians were Hellenized. It is certain that some of the people, especially those living in the cities were

affected by Greek atmosphere; and many of them might have desired to copy the Greek way of life, partly because of fashion and partly because they thought it good in itself. Anyhow, it is quite certain that Aryana adopted the Greek form to a large extent, but not the Greek spirit, for in matters of spiritual values she was quite confident that she could outstay the Greeks—and she did.

Much of the land outside the cities was held by the local landlords, sometimes under grants, the king being the feudal superior. These men lived in castles or strongholds on their estates, which were cultivated for them by the peasantry. The peasants, generally speaking, were serfs, tied to the soil, bought and sold with the land, living in their own villages without cooperative organizations, a class which seldom changed though conquerors came and went. The Greeks did not or could not free the serfs or ameliorate their condition for their own civilisation was to some extent based on and made possible by slavery. The establishing of new cities turned the king's land into city land on a considerable scale; and once the land became a city, the peasant had a fair chance of ceasing to be a serf.

The native population increased considerably during the two generations of peace. Even when Chang K'ien visited Aryan, a few years after the wars of Eucratides and the nomad invasion, he spoke in eloquent terms of the prosperity of the country. He said that the people of Bactria had no great king or chief at that time, but everywhere the cities and towns had set up their own petty chiefs and adopted security measures. Even the villages of Bactria had some system of carrying on for themselves without a central government. The country is said to have reached a stage in which the absence of a central authority did not seem to matter much. They had their own assemblies and occasional councils and boards of commercial income and expenditure, with officials to supervise finance and look after public works.

The number of Greek-Bactrian villages shows that by the end of the 2nd century B. C., Bactria was in this respect far ahead of any other country east of the Euphrates. This must have

meant a considerable improvement and uplift in the condition of the life prevailing in these villages. The result was that the rulers had the active support of their people, without which they could not have kept their positions. The landlords, with their retainers, supplied the famous Bactrian cavalry, which could shoot and ride at the same time with great dexterity. Euthydemus' 10,000 horse sufficiently attest to the increase of the population as well as his popularity with the local elements. And the fact that he sought to hold his line of defence at the Arius against Antiochus with the Bactrian cavalry shows that he could count on the loyalty of the Bactrians. It seems that Euthydemus had really secured for his house the backing and co-operation of the Bactrians, which Alexander in his own time had tried to do by marrying Roxana (or Roxane). Alexander had fully realized that the only way to rule over these freedom-loving people was to take them into a partnership; and Euthydemus put this plan successfully into execution, while at the same time trying his best to improve the condition of the serfs. It was due to this wise and farsighted policy that many Bactrians acquired a knowledge of and even a liking for Greek civic forms; and many must have picked up a certain amount of Greek, the official language of the court, polis and settlements alike. Greek became specially popular among the upper class, and some even wrote in it.

Another very important thing that affected Aryana at this stage was the adoption of the Seleucid calendar. It was the first attempt on a comprehensive scale to reckon time from an era, a famous event, instead of counting by the reigning years of a king. It was this calendar, beginning from 312 B. C., which the Bactrian kings took with them to India.

Some other things which appear to be certain were the general rise in the standard of living of the people, the evolution of settlements into the cities, and of villages into settlements. Bactria, "Mother of Cities," and "Paradise of the East," was the capital of this far-flung empire. It was the traditional home of the Aryans and of Zoroaster, and its other name, Zariaspa, suggests that it had a great fire-temple. It stood on both sides

of the river Bactrus, the united stream of Band-i-Amir and the Darrah, which then reached the Oxus. At the time of Euthydemus it was a flourishing city and an important clearing house of trade. It was walled and had a very strong fortress. Inside the city the grand temple of the native goddess, Anahita (or Anaitis) stood in full glory, forming a centre for the local population. This old goddess of the Oxus had by now developed into a goddess of fertility on the Babylonian model. Inside the temple stood a beautiful image of the goddess wearing a golden crown with eight stars and a hundred rays, clad in the skins of thirty beavers of bright silver and gold. She and her crown of rays figure on the coins of Demetrius, which must mean that she was the city-goddess of Greek-Bactria, as she subsequently became for Greek Pushkalavati too.*

**Development of Trade Routes.**

Bactria during this period became a great trade centre and had direct relations with both East and West. In Bactria, like a nerve centre, met all the great routes which crossed Asia. One of these, tarsting from the Mauryan capital of Pataliputra on the Ganges, ran across northern India to Mathura, on the Jumna, Sagala (Sialkot), and Taxila to Alexandria-Capisa south of the Hindu Kush, and from there across the mountains to Batcria. Another, route ran from Bactria to Hekatompylos, Ecbatana and Artemita to Celeucia, thence to Damascus and the Phoenician ports. A third route linked Bactria with distant China. It was no doubt chiefly for the sake of trade with the West that the Graeco-Bactrian kings held the distant Indian province of Surastrene and its great port, Barygaza. Shipping still had to follow the Gedrosian coast, the route Nearchus had used in Alexander's days.

There must have been a brisk trade down the Oxus into the Caspian and thence by the Cyrus river down the Phasis to the Black Sea. In the 3rd century B. C., Discorias, on the Black Sea coast, was one of the most flourishing ports.

Chang K'ien, the Chinese diplomat, who saw Tahia (Bactria)

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* The Greek in Bactria and India, by W. W. Thorn, p. 115

in 128 B. C. said that the Bactrians lived mostly by trade and agriculture. He estimated their number at over a million and called their capital "Lan-Chi." He was struck by its bazaars and brisk trade. Though by this time the central government had been destroyed, the people under their petty chiefs and within their walled towns led a life of peace and looked after their own affairs. People had different dialects, but they could understand each other. They placed a high value on their women, and husbands were mostly guided in their decisions by the advice of their wives.

**Agriculture.**

The chief wealth of Bactria lay in her soil. It did not produce any gold, and the Zarafshan (meaning sprinkler of gold) river does not refer to gold-washing, but to its value for irrigation. Apollodorus says that what made the Bactrian Greeks so powerful was the fertility of the land, where the Oxus and each of its tributaries were utilized to the utmost for cultivation. The Greeks appropriately called the Oxus the "Jewel of the East,". The goddess of the land Anahita, who according to an old tradition, had a thousand arms, was the personification of the Oxus and its innumerable canals. Bactria was the gift of the Oxus in the sense that Egypt is the gift of the Nile. The Greeks in Bactria always paid great attention to the maintenance and the development of irrigation facilities, a thing inculcated by Zoroaster himself. Besides, a considerable part of the country was cultivated by an indigenous system of underground channels still in vogue in some parts of Afghanistan.

Another important centre of trade and agriculture in this period was the double city of Alexandria-Capisa*, the capital of

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* Capisa (Kapisa, a city of Paropamisadae and the capital of Capisene or Kapici) was destroyed by Cyrus the Great after meeting a stubborn resistance at the hands of the local people. It is mentioned by Pliny and later on by Panini, and from Panini's time onward it is known in Sanskrit literature as well. But our chief knowledge of Capisene, as the kingdom may be called in distinction from its capital, Capisa, comes from Chinese sources. It was a fruitful land of alpine valleys surrounded by mountains on all sides. It was here that the Chinese princes were detained as hostages



*An ivory statuette, discovered at Bagram in 1937 and now preserved in the Kabul Museum, represents Yaksi, the goddess of rivers, riding Makara, a strange animal with elephant trunk.*

Paropamisadae, which stood on the main route leading from Bactria to India. Alexandria was founded by Alexander himself under the name of Alexandria-ad-Caucasum, and was known as the "Queen of the Mountains." It lay on the western side of the united Ghorband-Panjsher river, near their confluence, facing the old town of Capisa, lying on the eastern side.

The chief god of the combined cities, as the coins show, was the elephant god of Kapisa, who lived on Mount Pliusara (or Pilosholo), and was Hellenized as Zeus. The two towns lay close together, but their relationship cannot be properly guessed. Alexandria was overwhelmingly Greek, and all the government buildings and the palaces of the ruler were situated in this section.

In Gandhara, Ptolemy speaks of another important agricultural centre, Nagara (Nangrahar, now Jalalabad or Jalalkot), which was also called Dionysophis, and which contained a Greek settlement. Similarly, Pushkalavati (near modern Charsada), the capital of Gandhara was also a famous Greek polis, and was designated as "The City of Lotus."

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by Kanishka the Great. Later, in 630, when the Chinese pilgrim, Huien Tsang (Hsuan-Tsang) visited it, it was the centre of a powerful kingdom including Lampaka (Laghman), Nagara (Nangrahar) and Gandhara. To the southwest of the capital stood the Pilosholo Mountain—having the form of an elephant and meaning solid as an elephant. The Greeks sought to identify local divinities with their own. They evidently regarded the tutelary deity of the city of Capisa as Zeus.

CHAPTER VII

# FRESH INVASIONS OF NOMADS

After the death of Eucratides, his eldest son, Heliocles, came to power. He tried to reconcile the partisans of Euthydemids and with their help was able to expel the Parthians from the Bactrian soil and push them back to the Arius line. Heliocles probably kept the territory which his father had held north of the Hindu Kush. Instead of consolidating his position and conserving his strength for the coming storm of the barbarians, he made a fatal mistake in invading India, which had also proved the undoing of his predecessors. This war, which lasted for no less than three years, had disastrous consequences. No doubt Heliocles was able to push his frontiers as far as Taxila and the Jhelum, but thereby he wasted his energy and weakened his position in the north, the most vulnerable point of his kingdom. In about 141 B.C. the curtain falls on Greek Bactria, to rise again in 128 B. C. The latter date is the year in which the Chinese general and diplomat, Chang K'ien, was in Bactria and the Graeco-Bactrian kingdom north of the Hindu Kush practically ceased to exist.

Long before this time the Sakas had crossed the border and, by joining hands with the Parthians, had taken possession of the southeastern part of Aryana as far as the lower Indus valley. This nomadic upheaval is attributed to several causes. Foremost among these was the internecine wars in Bactria itself, which had sapped the resources of the country and thereby had made it an easy prey for foreign aggression. The second may be called the constant allurement of the fertile plains of India. Instead of consolidating their position within their own country, these Bactrian kings were fond of conquests ; and, in pursuit of their ambitious designs, wasted their energies in distant lands. The

third may be described as the upheaval of the nomadic tribes in accordance to fix natural laws and regular climatic periods, an alternation of humidity and aridity, which according to Professor Toynbee, work in cycles of every 600 years. The periodic increase in the fertility of the soil leads to an increase in the nomadic population, and the subsequent decrease of fertility and consequently of food forces the hungry nomads to invade the neighbouring settled lands.

There is no doubt that the Sakas' world at this time was overpopulated and ripe for emigration, but had it not been so, the result would have been the same; for the movement had been accelerated by the general upheaval of the nomadic tribes living in the northwest of China. A struggle between the Yueh-chi and another great horde, the Hiung-nu (or the White Huns), probably in 176 B. C., resulted in the complete defeat of the former, who, being dislodged from its motherland, Kansu, was compelled to move westward in search of new pastures. A part of this horde, known as Little Yueh-chi, marching southward, settled in the Tarim valley; while the main branch in its onward march came into conflict with the Wu-sun, whose king was killed in the action, and who were forced to leave their grazing ground to the victors. The Yueh-chi were not to enjoy the fruits of their victory for long. Hotly pursued by the Hiung-nu, they were again defeated and dislodged from their newly-acquired possessions. Moving westward in about 161 B. C., they clashed with the Sai-wang, another powerful tribe, living near Lake Issy Kul. Once more fortune favoured the Yueh-chi; but this time, too, the victory was short-lived. The Wu-sun, with the help of the White Huns, fell upon them from behind and drove them from their freshly-acquired lands. Continuing their journey westward, the Yueh-chi came into contact with some Saka tribes on the right bank of the Jaxartes. The Sakas were pushed forward, and crossing the Oxus, entered the plains of Bactria in about 135 B. C. Thus, at this time, a condition of general unrest took place among all the nomadic tribes living in Central Asia. Wave

followed wave in quick succession, and on they came towards Bactria and Aeria.

In about 128 B. C., when Chang K'ien, who was sent by the Han Emperor, Wuti (or Wou-tu), as his envoy to the Yueh-chi with a view to soliciting their alliance against the White Huns, their common enemy, he found them (the Yueh-chi) in possession of Tahia (Bactria); the Graeco-Bactrian kingdom north of the Hindu Kush had by now come to an end. The Chinese diplomat failed in his mission as the Yueh-chi, war-weary as they were, wanted to live in peace in the fertile lands which had now fallen into their hands.

Meanwhile, the Sakas were not idle. Driven southward by the onrush of the Yueh-chi, they came along the Merv-Herat route in the direction of Parthia. Finding their progress dammed in the west, they turned south in the direction of Farah and settled in Seistan. One of these tribes, the Parsii, passing through Arachosia, came as far as Paropamisadae; while the main branch, moving east, occupied the lower Indus Valley, and thence, under their leader, Maues, proceeded to take the Punjab. The Sakas, however, like the Parthians, whom they seem to have resembled in many respects, took advantage of the situation and utilized the superior civilisation of the conquered Graeco-Bactrians. They retained the provincial administration and coined their money in the Greek mints with a similar bilingual tradition, Greek and Kharoshti. There were still plenty of Graeco-Bactrians in the Paropamisadae, for, when the Kushan king, Kajula Kadphises, invaded the country some generations later, he tried to win them over to his side with a view to having their co-operation in his conflict with the Sakas and the Parthians.

CHAPTER VIII

# THE KUSHANS

The Yueh-chi, after driving the Sakas towards Aeria and Parthia, took possession of the whole of northern Afghanistan, where they came into contact with a highly civilized and cultured people, who lived mostly in walled towns and carried on a lucrative trade with east and west. The rough conquerors gradually gave up their nomadic habits and adopted a sedentary mode of life. Mingling freely with the Bactrians, they soon learned their trade and arts.

A century later the chief of the Kushans, one of the Yueh-chi tribes, gained supremacy over all the other clans, and succeeded in founding a united and powerful kingdom in Bactria, known by the name of his own tribe. Bactria, under this new dynasty, once more became the centre of a great power which was destined to play an important role in the history of Asia. In the west, the Kushans measured swords successfully with the Parthians ; in the east they waged war with China ; while in the south they extended their boundaries as far as Malwa and Pataliputra, and had a brisk trade with China and the Roman Empire.

The chief of the Kushans, who succeeded in imposing his authority upon the rest of the Yueh-chi tribes, was Kajula Kadphises, known to European writers as Kadphises I. His accession date is put approximately in the year 40 A. D., and he died at the advanced age of eighty in or about 78 A. D. Not content with his possessions north of the Hindu Kush, he engaged himself in the formidable task of subjugating the provinces lying south of that range and succeeded in taking Ki-pin (Capisa), Kao-fu (Kabul), Pouta (Zabulistan) and Gardez. His empire extended from Sogdiana to the Indus and possibly to the Jhelum.

Kajula Kadphises was succeeded by his son, Vima Kadphises or Kadphises II. This prince, who was no less ambitious than his father, completed the conquest of northern India.

Towards the close of the first century A. D., China had become extremely powerful and, for a period of thirty years (73-102). General Pan-chao led an army from victory to victory, until it reached the shores of the Caspians. The steady advance of the Chinese in Central Asia, so close to Bactria, naturally alarmed the Kushan king. He challenged the Chinese power by demanding the hand of a Chinese princess in marriage, the refusal of which led to hostilities between the two countries. Kadphises equipped a formidable force of 70,000 horse under the command of his general, Si. Due to a long and tedious journey through a difficult and inhospitable country, the general health of these soldiers, suffered heavily, and they were easily overpowered by Pan-Chao. As a result of this defeat, Kadphises was compelled to pay an annual tribute to the Chinese emperor.

Not disappointed in the least by his defeat in the east, Kadphises tried to open new avenues for his people. Fortune favoured him and he was able to open commercial relations between Aryana and the distant Roman Empire. The flow of Roman gold for silk, spices and gems enabled Kadphises to strike gold coins in large numbers.

Kadphises took the proud title of "King of Kings". His reign saw the decline of Graeco-Bactrian art and the beginning of a new school of sculpture known by the name of Graeco-Buddhist or Gandhara School of Art.

**Kanishka the Great.**

Kadphises II was succeeded by Kanishka, who is the most famous of the Kushan kings, and who has left a cherished memory behind him. Under him, who appears to have come to the throne in the 2nd quarter of the 2nd century, the Kushan empire attained its zenith. On the east it extended as far as Benares and into Maharashtra in the south, to the Sea of Aral in the north, and to Seistan in the west. In the west Kanishka is alleged to have waged successful wars with the Parthians, which

brought the Roman frontier within six hundred miles of the western limits of the Yueh-chi empire. His conquest of Kashghar, Yarkand and Khotan was a most striking military exploit; he succeeded marvelously where his predecessor had failed. By this brilliant victory he not only freed himself from the obligation of paying tribute to China, but exacted the surrender of hostages, including a prince of the imperial Han dynasty.

The hostages were honourably treated and were assigned suitable residences in different parts of the country according to the seasons. During the summer they were allotted a monastery in Capisa, north of Kabul, which was specially erected for their accommodation; while in winter and autumn they usually resided in the Gandhara valley.

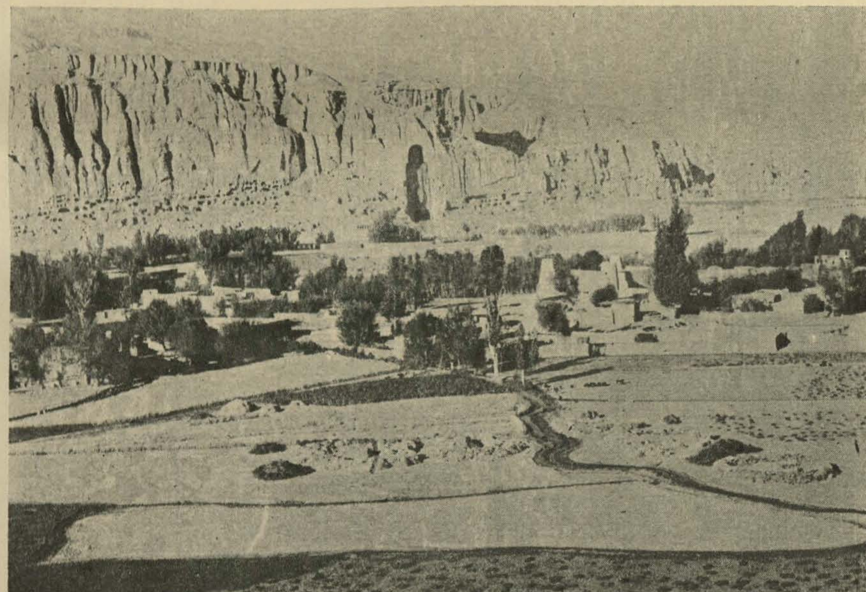
Huien Tsang, the famous Chinese pilgrim, who, on his way to India, resided at the Capisa monastery (in 630 A. D.), tells a curious story about the treasure deposited by the Chinese hostages at the Shah-lo-ka shrine of Capisa, in recognition of the generosity with which they were treated during their stay there. A rich store of gold and jewels was known to be buried under the feet of the image of Vaisravana outside the eastern gate of the hall of the Buddha. One of the greedy rulers, who wanted to dig it out and make use of it, was frightened away by the guardian spirit. Later on, the monks wanted to make use of it for repairing the shrine. Again they were terrified by a similar manifestation. Now, when they saw the Chinese pilgrim, they requested him to use his influence with the spirit and make it agree to the removal of the treasure for the purpose of spending it on the urgently-needed repairs to the shrine. Huien Tsang, complying with the request, burned some incense and duly assured the guardian angel that the money would be honestly spent in repairs. This plan succeeded; and, when the monks were ready to dig up the spot, they did not meet any molestation. At the depth of some eight feet a great copper vessel was found containing several hundred-weight of gold, besides a handsome quantity of pearls and jewels.

Kanishka had two capitals: one was Purushapura (now

Peshawar), where he spent his winter ; the other, called Capisa (now Bagram), was his summer resort. Besides, he usually spent his early springs and late autumns in the happy valley of Nangrahara (modern Jalalabad).

It appears that in the beginning Kanishka had leanings towards Zoroastrianism and even worshipped some Hindu deities ; but later on he embraced Buddhism, and, like, Asoka the Great, became an active and liberal patron of that faith. Kanishka, we are told, studied the Buddhist scriptures in his leisure hours under the guidance of a monk, who attended him daily at his palace to give instructions. He convened the Fourth Council of the Buddhist monks, the last great assembly of its kind, to settle disputed points of the faith. Vasumitra was appointed to preside over the meeting, with Asvagosha, the famous author, as vice-president. It was at this meeting, which was attended by more than five hundred monks from all over the Buddhist world, that the foundation of a new school—Mahayana or the Great Wheel, as opposed to Hinayana or Smaller Wheel was laid, and Kanishka himself became a follower of the new faith.

Buddhism was, in origin, not a religion, but a philosophy of life and a code of morals. The Buddha, the enlightened one, was not a god but an inspired teacher, who preached the middle path between indulgence and ascetism. The Buddha called this "the middle path," as it avoids both the extremes of gross luxury and of grim austerity. The path can be followed by those who cannot completely give up worldly pursuits. For the members of the Sangha it was obligatory to strive for Nirvana, the abode of eternal peace. This could be achieved by the extinction of personality and by obeying the ten following commandments : (1) not to covet property belonging to others ; (2) not to kill ; (3) not to use intoxicants ; (4) not to tell lies ; (5) not to commit adultery ; (6) not to take part in dancing and singing ; (7) not to use unguent, flowers or perfumes ; (8) not to eat at odd times ; (9) not to sleep on comfortable beds and (10) not to accept or keep money. Such was Buddhism in the days of



*The Valley of Bamian, a city of caves and statues. The largest of the figures of Buddha, 53 meters high, can be seen in the background.*

Asoka, who was probably the first to encourage this way of life in his vast empire extending to the foot of the Hindu Kush.

The Hinayana School or Southern School adheres largely to this original faith as preached by Buddha himself, while the Mahayana School or Northern Buddhism underwent many changes and gradually developed into a new religion. The old school never depicted Buddha in a human form ; its presence was symbolized by an empty chair, a footprint, an umbrella, a riderless horse or even an empty throne. According to the new school, the Buddha is regarded as a divinity to whom prayer must be offered ; Buddha is portrayed in human form and is worshipped. From this time onward Buddha's image became an object of worship.

The first image of Buddha owes its origin to Greek influence, having probably been made towards the end of the Graeco-Bactrian occupation of Gandhara about 100 B. C. This early date has, however, very little support. Bachhofe and Marshall, for example, while still adhering to the theory of Hellenistic origin, prefer a date more than 100 years later, *i.e.* in the first half of the first century A. D., when the Sakas ruled in Gandhara. Others (and these are in the majority) ascribe the creation of the Buddha image to influence from the Roman Empire. Buchtal, for example, sees in the Buddha figure a copy of the Roman toga, perhaps even of Augustus himself, an imperial influence coming chiefly from Alexandria *via* the Red Sea. Upon close analysis it will, no doubt, be seen that both in the Graeco-Buddhist and the Roman-Buddhist theory the Hellenistic strands are very active.*

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*At Bamian, some 150 miles northwest of Kabul, there stand to this day two gigantic statues of Buddha. The smaller, 35 meters high, is supposed to have been carved out of rock in the second century A. D., just after the Mahayana School came into existence.

Bamian was an important cultural and commercial centre in pre-Islamic days. It lay on the famous trade route linking Bactria with Alexandria-ad-Caucasum. The whole valley is littered with cave temples, monasteries and statues of Buddha, extending for miles on both sides of a hill. They were literally hewn out of solid rock during the flourishing days of Buddhism in Afghanistan. No pictures, no words can do justice to the work that has been done there.

Kanishka, though an ardent Buddhist, continued to honour the other religions of his vast dominions as well. A curious medley of his coins, decorated with the deities of the Hindus, Bactrians, Greaks and Persians, bears testimony to the fact. His coins have been discovered in many places over his far-flung empire including southern Afghanistan. On his coins he calls himself the "king of Gandhara" and "Roanao Rao," that is, "king of kings". In India his coins have been found in large numbers in Mathura, Sarasvati, Sarnath and Gurakhpur.

Kanishka was a great builder. He adorned his capitals with magnificent monuments and monasteries. In Peshawar, his winter capital, he is said to have built a beautiful Sangharama with a lofty stupa 150 feet in height, perhaps one of the most magnificent temples of the day. Similarly, at Capisa, his summer residence, innumerable monasteries were erected. Huien Tsang describes with great satisfaction the wealth and splendour of these monasteries and stupas of the Kushan period which dotted the whole country around. The smaller statue of Buddha at Bamian, 35 meters high, or at least the stupa at its feet (no longer in existence), which became the core of other Buddhist buildings in this valley, may be ascribed to the efforts of this great king.

Kanishka was a liberal patron of men of letters, and his name is associated with at least a dozen literary luminaries, foremost among these being Vasumitra, a great theologian ; Asvagosha, poet, musician, scholar and a famous theologian ; and Charaka, the most celebrated of the early authors on medicine. The king also extended his patronage to Greeks and many other foreigners.

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The caves are specially known for their frescoes of figures and landscapes, executed with great delicacy and amazing detail and in colour that is almost beyond belief. There are scenes depicting the life of Buddha, and dancing girls and singers playing on harps. Unfortunately, in some places only a patch of colour, or a fragment of a figure, a head or a part of a gown, remains. As one sees and studies the stupendous excavations from the solid rock and the beauty of carving that were available to those early artist-monks, one cannot help but marvel at the infinite patience and industry and at the devotion that created such a testimony to the glory of their god.

Kanishka's reign was a period of great development in art, science and literature, as well as in commerce. This cultural and artistic renaissance was the result of fresh contacts with the outside world. The expansion of the Roman Empire brought the wealthy Roman traders to the East. The gold of the Roman Empire flowed into Aryana and contributed to a large extent to its prosperity and stability. With the growth of commerce, an exchange of ideas was inevitable. This influence is clearly visible in the artistic achievements of the age.

The Kushan Empire of Kanishka's days straddled the great trade routes which traversed Asia from China to the Mediterranean and from Turkestan through the Hindu Kush to the Indian subcontinent. The importance of this key-position in world commerce is emphasized by literary and archaeological evidence. A mercnat's handbook, written in Greek, has preserved certain historical facts relating to this traffic. From the Western world came figured linen, topaz, coral, frankincense, glass vessels, silver plates and wine. In return were sent turquoise, lapis lazuli, skins, cotton cloth, silk yarn, indigo and spices.

In 1937-39 the most dramatic evidence for this arterial commerce was found in the ancient city of Bagram, at the foot of the towering Hindu Kush and close beside the ancient route linking India and Bactriana. French archaeologists excavated a building in which were two rooms with one or more blocked-up doorways. Packed in serried masses into these rooms was an astonishing array of wares, which can now been seen in the Museum at Kabul and in the Musee Guimet of Paris. Carved ivories in great quantities and of exquisite quality and beauty from India and lacquer-ware from China lay side by side with glassware and stucco-medallions from the Mediterranean world, from Alexandria and perhaps from Syria. The glassware can be dated to the first, second and third centuries A. D., and it is evident that the collection represented an accumulation of many years and should not be considered as a single consignment. Its terminal date may be the middle of the third century A. D., when Shahpur I of Persia brought the Kushan empire to a violent end,

Here is a vivid example of that commerce which brought the luxuries of China, India and the west to the highways of the Kushan realm. It is likely that the Bagram treasure-house was, in fact, a royal depot for the storage of goods collected as dues from trade in transit. In the middle of the third century, the Sassanians cut this direct route with the West. Since Kanishka ruled what is now Afghanistan, he was in a position to divert the silk trade from China through the Khyber Pass down to Barbaricon at the mouth of the Indus river. From here the merchandise of the caravan could go the safer and cheaper way by the Persian Gulf to Characene, the kingdom which controlled the Tigris-Euphrates delta. During the reign of the Kushans, when the Parthian monarchy was heavily engaged in wars with the Romans, the Characenes and the Kushans, to their mutual advantage, were able to carry on a lucrative trade.

It was doubtless to the close contact between the Kushan empire and the West that gave the famous Buddhist art in and after the second century A. D., a quality which distinguishes it from other oriental schools. This quality is a blending of Eastern with Western elements into an essentially Oriental type, which assimilates its Western borrowings and derives an additional strength from them without loss of individuality.

Kanishka ruled for about 27 years, C. 144—171 A. D. He was succeeded by his son, Huvishka, who was the viceroy of northern India during his father's time. Unfortunately the events of his reign are not very well clear to us. It is probable that he ruled for a period of twenty or twenty-five years. Some are of the opinion that after the death of Kanishka his vast empire was divided between his two sons, Vaishka and Huvishka. But so far no coins of the former have been discovered. The coinage of Huvishka, like that of his father, exhibits a medley of dieties, but he seems to have been inclined to Brahmanism and to have worshipped Shiva and Vishnu.

Huvishka was followed by his son, Vasudeva, during whose reign the breakup of the Kushan empire begins. In Afghanistan itself petty kingdoms arose on all sides, some of which conti-

nued to reign independently in different parts of the country until the invasions of the Ephthalites, which commenced in the 5th century A. D. Some of the smaller principalities in the mountain fastnesses of the country even survived this onslaught of the barbarians.

Vasudeva, too, seems to have been of Hindu inclinations and his coins exhibit Hindu deities. His death occurred probably in 220 A. D., and from his time onward the Kushan empire declined rapidly.

The fall of the Kushans was followed by a period of disintegration in the political as well as in the social life of the people. Most of the ideas and institutions failed to survive the onslaught of the forces of disorder and confusion. A new and formidable foe appeared on the scene. The Sassanians, under the leadership of Ardshir, defeated the Parthians in 226 A. D., and under Ardshir's son and successor, Shahpur I, they were able to annex Gandhara, probably in 241 A. D. Artistic activity ceased at this point and it was not until 390 A. D. that the revival of the Kidara Kushans (or Little Kushans) re-established conditions in which Buddhist art could again flourish. For sixty more years (390-450) Buddhist artists were once more busy, but instead of stone the principal media now were clay and stucco. There is a general agreement as to the terminal date of Gandhara art, though there is little agreement as to its beginning.

The overthrow of the Lesser Kushans towards the middle of the fifth century A.D. made the Huns supreme in Central Asia. These fierce nomads ruled over a vast territory and became terrible scourge for mankind. First they lay their hands on Aryana, where they carried wholesale slaughter and destruction. Then, marching in the Indian sub-continent, they extended their authority as far as Rajputana and Malwa.

CHAPTER IX

# GRAECO-BUDDHIST ART OF GANDHARA

A great mass of sculptures and reliefs discovered in the various parts of eastern Afghanistan and lower Kabul valley is said to represent the famous school of art——the Graeco-Buddhist Art of Gandhara. They consist mostly of the images of Buddha and relief-sculptures representing scenes from Buddhist texts. The art owes its origin to the Graeco-Bactrian rulers of Afghanistan. But though the technique is borrowed from the Greeks, the art itself is essentially local in spirit and is employed to give expression to the beliefs and practices of the Buddha. Practically everything excavated so far is an illustration of the life and previous life of that great teacher.

Gandhara is the term applied to the lower Kabul valley, comprising the districts of Nangrahara (Jalalabad), Purushupura (Peshawar), Pushkalavati (Charsada) and Swat. The influence of Gandhara art has been traced throughout modern Afghanistan as far as Bamian and Kunduz, and even further north and east into Central Asia and distant Japan. The content of the art is purely Buddhist, though the form at the start was largely Hellenistic, and commonplace Greek motives are freely used as decorations. But, with the passage of time, Greek influence decreased and was replaced by the Graeco-Roman West. Sometimes the two arts overlap each other.

Here in Aryana Buddhism underwent a great change and absorbed many elements of foreign culture. Primitive Buddhism, as already stated, was a system of practical morals combined with a tender regard for the sanctity of all living creatures. Greek as well as other foreign influences stimulated mythology and imagery. Hellenistic culture in the second century B. C. led to

the development of a new school of art—Buddhist. Bactria played an important role in this connection.

Forty years after the death of Asoka the Great, the Bactrian armies of Demetrius crossed the Hindu Kush into eastern Afghanistan and paved the way for Greek culture as well as for an independent Greek rule, which remained paramount in that part of the country for nearly one hundred years, and lingered on still longer in the remote hilly districts of Afghanistan. The antiquities which these Greek kings of Bactria have bequeathed to us are not numerous, but all of them consistently bear witness to the strong hold which Hellenistic art must have had upon this part of the country. Of these antiquities, most instructive, perhaps, are the coins, the stylish history of which is singularly lucid and coherent. In the earliest examples every feature is Hellenistic. The standard of these coins, their legends and mythology are all Greek in character, and designed with a grace and beauty reminiscent of the schools of Praxtiteles or Lysippus. With the consolidation of the Graeco-Bactrian supremacy south of the Hindu Kush, the Greek standard and mythology gradually gave way to those more suited to the needs of the local people. Bilingual legends became customary, and gradually other Hellenistic influences disappeared. The process of degeneration continued, and the portraits lost their freshness and vigour. Nevertheless, it may be taken as a general maxim that the earlier they were, the more nearly they approximated the style of the Hellenistic works.

Nor does this numismatic evidence stand alone. It is endorsed by other antiquities of this age which have come down to us. Of the buildings of the Graeco-Bactrian kings themselves practically no remains have yet been brought to light. A few unembellished walls of some dwelling houses, in which Hellenistic elements are in complete preponderance over the Oriental, do not help us much. It is presumed that the ornamentation of the stupas of this period was inspired by the "Corinthian order," modified by the addition of Indian motifs. Similarly, other arts of this period derived their inspiration from the Hellenistic School.



*The Stucce-head of the Buddha discovered from Hadda, six miles south of Jalalabad, reminiscence of the Gandhara School of Art.*

There is no doubt that the Roman trade with the Kushan empire carried with it not only goods and ideas but also objects of fine art and craftsmanship, which had a great influence on the local arts, and these may safely be called the by-product of the Kushan commerce with the West. These sweeping changes were made possible and found full expression under the benevolent patronage of Kanishka the Great. it was under him that the centre of Buddhism shifted from its birthplace to Gandhara. His patronage, undoubtedly, gave a renewed stimulus to the spread of the religion as well as to the Buddhist art in the vast Kushan empire, whence they found their way into China and other Far Eastern countries. What was lacking was any comprehensive tradition in which to express the new observance ; and it was here that the Western art came to the rescue. In the Roman Empire, the figures of the emperors and some notables had already emerged as a dominant feature of an artistic composition. Now this and some of the other details were skilfully adapted to the Buddhist problem. Figures clad in western clothing, or a Roman toga, garlanded Apollos, Minervas, even an occasional scene from a western legend, such as that of the Trojan horse and of the state arrival or departure of a Roman emperor, found their way into the sculptors' workshops of Gandhara and the adjacent regions. Then these designs were transmuted by the Buddhist craftsmen and given a Buddhist context. The fact that the region had previously been ruled by Graeco-Bactrian kings paved the way for Greek influence as well.

We are not quite sure of the beginnings of this famous school of art. According to some writers it originated as early as the 2nd century B. C. in Gandhara itself. Subsequent discoveries by M. Hackin of the French Archaeological Mission to Afghanistan in 1936 at Kunduz, and the Russian archaeologists, Mr. and Mrs. Traiver, in the vicinity of Tirmiz, trace the source of the school to Bactria. M. Hackin, in his article entitled "L' art Greco-Bactrian et l' art Greco-Buddique de la Bactriane," tries to prove that this art originated in Bactria, and later on, at the end of the first centry and at the beginning of the second century A. D.,

particularly in the reign of Kanishka, developed in Gandhara, when there was a large influx of the artists from the Roman Empire into Gandhara.

It was certainly during the rule of the Kushan kings that the majority of the sculptures were produced, which has made the Kushan era very famous in history. Unfortunately, none of these sculptures bears a date in any known era, nor does consideration of their style enable us to determine their chronological sequence with any approach to accuracy.

The question that confronts us is who made the first statue of Buddha and when? It is alleged by some that it was under the lavish patronage of the Scythians (Sakas) kings that the School of Gandhara came into being. The representation of a Buddha on a coin of Maues, who reigned from c.80 to 58 B. C., now seems certain enough. The humped-bull on the reverse side of this coin shows that both sides were minted at Pushkalavati, the capital of Gandhara. Maues, after conquering Gandhara, wanted to assure his new subjects that he respected their religious susceptibilities. Later on, when Kajula Kadphises came to power, he struck a series of coins which shows on the obverse a seated Buddha with one hand raised in benediction. Maues' conquest of Gandhara was not earlier or much later than 70 B. C., and the Buddha statue must have been well-established before he issued his coins with this legend upon them. This dates the Gandhara Buddha in the early part of the first century B. C. at the latest. There is no doubt, as mentioned above, concerning the fact that this art owed its origin to the Greek settlers in Bactria. Though the technique was borrowed, the art was essentially local in spirit, and it was employed in details to give expression to the beliefs and practices of the Buddhists.

The first Greek artist who decided to represent Buddha by a figure may or may not have known or even cared whether Buddha was a man or a god. Being a Greek he only knew one way of representing him, that is in human form, probably an imitation of a Greek god like Apollo. The succesive steps from a Greek Apollo to the Gandhara Buddha have often been traced. The Greek

influence may have been the reason why the Buddhists of Gandhara began to want the lives of Buddha glorified in stone or why they acquiesced to and took up the methods of the Greek artists, who could only represent Buddha as they represented their own gods, in human forms.

This art has survived mainly in sculptural forms, partly in stone, partly in stucco or plaster, and partly in clay. Most of the stone sculptures are carved in a kind of soft bluish stone, called schists, which is found mostly in Gandhara. Its comparatively high survival value tended to concentrate attention upon it. For more widely spread in space and probably in time is the equivalent sculpture in stucco and clay, which is found not only in Gandhara, but far afield along the arterial routes that Buddhist monks shared with the traders through the Hindu Kush and Turkestan. In Afghanistan the best-known source of this sculpture mostly in stucco but sometimes in stone, is Hadda, six miles south of modern Jalalabad, where there was a large Buddhist monastic settlement. Another monastery, as far away as Kunduz, has produced similar stuccos. It is easy to understand why the stucco medium, because of its ease of manipulation, is associated with a greater range and vividness of expression than the stonework ; and, on the other hand, why this facility and the possibility of using moulds encouraged mass production, particularly in the later and more decadent phases, when the use of the more resistant stone may have died out.

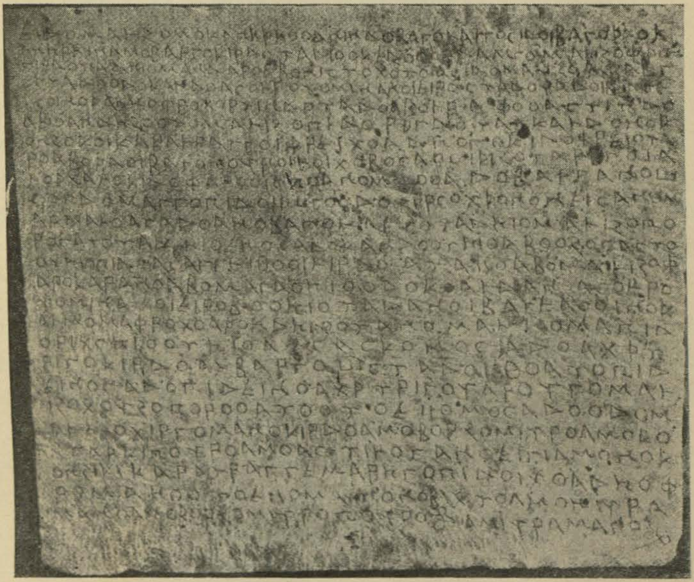
The excavations started at Surkh Kotal, near the modern town of Pul-i-Khumri, since 1951, have opened a new chapter in Afghan history, changing many of the previous conceptions about history, arts and culture of the country and about the source and the course of development of the famous school of Graeco-Buddhist Art. According to M. Schlumberger, the head of the French Archaeological Delegation in Afghanistan, this School (Graeco-Buddhist) was an off-shoot of a greater school, which he calls by the name of the "Kushan School," which had influence in the whole area from the Oxus to the Gangetic Plain. The

Kushan School has also been called the Graeco-Bactrian School of art.

The discovery of statues at Surkh Kotal removed all doubts about the similarity of the pattern of art which had heen developed during the Kushan period. It came into existence especially during the reign of Kanishka. Western scholars, who believed that Graeco-Buddhist School of Art to have originated in Grcece or Rome, are now beginning to realize that the roots of this Art are to be found in Afghanistan's Graeco-Bactrian School of Art. After the discovery of relics from a temple in Kunduz and later on at Surkh Kotal, it was definitely proved that Bactria is the origin of the Gandhara Art.

The most important object that the French Archaeological Delegation has discovered at Surkh Kotal, up to date, is an inscription in Greek alphabet, but in one of the local languages, probably Bactrian, Greek alphabet gained an ever-increasing currency in Afghanistan during the reign of the Kushan kings because of its simplicity and popularity.

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*The Surkh Kotal inscription unearthed at the bottom of the great stairs of the Cella Temple in 1957. Bearing Bactrian words in Greek characters, the inscription is displayed at the entrance hall of Kabul Museum. The Bactrian language was spoken in Afghanistan about 2,000 years ago.*

CHAPTER X

# THE EPHTHALITES AND THE KUSHANO EPHTHALITES

The Ephthalites are known to us by various names. The Persians and the Arabs called them Habtal, Hayatals and Hethal; the Greeks named them Ephthalites, while the Romans used to call them White Huns. There is also much controversy regarding their origin. Some look upon them as a branch of the yellow race, while others contend that they were Aryans, as their language is decisively Indo-European.

According to the Chinese sources, the original home of the Ephthalites, Hoa or Hoatun, was the country north of the Great Wall of China. They were first subjugated by a Turkish tribe, Juan Juan by name. Gradually gaining power, they were finally in a position to turn their attention to foreign conquests. Passing through Khotan (Chinese Turkestan) in their westward movement, they reached Aryana in about 425 A.D., and within a short time they were able to establish a powerful empire extending from the Caspian Sea to Khotan. This brought them into conflict with the Sassanian kings. Bahram Gur (420-440 A. D.), the Persian monarch, appointing Narse, his brother, as the regent to remain behind, came to meet the Ephthalites at the head of a formidable force. In the battle that took place near Merv, the Ephthalites were utterly defeated and their king, probably, Ifathilito, was slain in the action; and his crown fell into the hands of Bahram, which he presented to the fire temple of Bactria, called Nao-Bahar.

Shortly afterwards, during the reign of Yazdigird II (440-457), the Ephthalites, repairing their losses, were once more

in a position to assume the offensive. Fortune favoured them this time and they were able to inflict a crushing defeat on the Persians. The Ephtalite king who had led the expedition was probably Mehrpur, who was now in a position to regain the lost provinces.

Yazdigird, dying shortly afterwards, was succeeded by his son, Firoz. By this time Akhshnur (or Khushnawaz of the Persian writers) had come to power in Aryana. Firoz, who owed his throne to the timely assistance of Akhshnur, proved ungrateful and declared war on his benefactor. But he had soon to repent his folly, for, being defeated, he was forced to sue for peace. He gave his daughter in marriage to Akhshnur and promised to pay tribute and war indemnity leaving his son, Kubad behind, as a hostage for the faithful discharge of the treaty-terms.

Shortly afterwards, Firoz, violating the peace treaty, launched a second attack. The Persian army was totally annihilated, while Firoz himself was among the slain. This gave Akhshnur an opportunity to direct his attention elsewhere. Crossing the Hindu Kush, he took Capisa, Kabul, Ghazni, Pactiya and the whole of Gandhara (c. 465 A. D.).

Akhshnur, whose capital was Tochari, on the Oxus, dying shortly afterwards, was succeeded by his viceroy, Toramana, a remarkable warrior, who, in the space of a short time created an extensive empire including Northern and Southern India. Toramana's conquest of India probably began in the beginning of the sixth century A. D., but he did not live long enough to reap the fruits of his victory. Dying in 502, he was succeeded by his son Mihirakula.

Mihirakula (c. 502-542 A. D.), the last king of this line, was a blood-thirsty tyrant, who massacred a large number of the Buddhist monks and destroyed their monasteries. He had two capitals, one at Sakala (present Sialkot) the other at Balkh, while his military headquarters was at Bamian, in the heart of the Hindu Kush. In the beginning of his reign he added Kashmir to his dominions. It is said that he levied tribute from forty countries. His cruelty and oppression, however, gradually aliena-

ted him from the hearts of his subjects, who were forced to take up arms against him. Driven out of the plains of northern India, he retired to the valley of Kashmir where he remained until his death in 542 A. D.

Mihirakula's death shattered the fabric of the Ephthalite empire and involved Aryana once more in confusion and anarchy. A few of the Ephthalite chiefs were able to maintain their independence for some time in the various parts of the country, but they were absorbed gradually into the local populace, as were the Greeks and other foreign elements before them.

Meanwhile, the Kushans, who, on the approach of the Ephthalites, had taken to their mountain fastnesses, came out of their strong-holds and succeeded in establishing independent principalities in different parts of the country. These local dynasties have come to be known as Kushano-Ephthalities. They made common cause with the local Ephthalities against the Sassanians and the Turks, who were menacing Aryana from the west and the north. A large number of the coins of these petty kings have been discovered in the various parts of Afghanistan. Huien Tsang speaks highly of some of these local chiefs who held their own against heavy foreign pressure.

The Turks, under their great leader, Istami, had by now attained great power in Central Asia, and threatened to wipe out the culture of Aryana altogether. Simultaneously, Nausherwan, the Sassanian king of Persia, invaded Afghanistan (about 566 A. D.) and occupied Seistan, Aeria and Balkh. Not content with these conquests he cast longing eyes on the eastern and southern provinces of the country as well. But here he met with stiff resistance at the hands of the local Kushano-Ephthalites, who were able to hold their own.

Huien Tsang also speaks of the local independent principalities at Bamian, Capisene and Jaghori (Hazarajat). It is gathered from his writings that the ruler of Capisene, whom he met at his capital, Capisa during his sojourns in about 632 A. D., was not a Turk as the Arab and some of the early Muslim

historians have thought him to be, but a member of the well-known Kashitria (warrior) caste, and he had two capitals : one at Capisi (or Capisa) north of Kabul, and the second at Udhanbanda (Und, Waihand, Uhind or Uwand), near Attock. The king of Capisa, according to the same source, held away over the whole of eastern and southern Afghanistan. He was in possession of no less than ten principalities, foremost among these being Lampaka, Nagarahara, Gandhara and Takshasila. He was a brave and intelligent king and loved his subjects dearly. A devout Buddhist, he was delighted to entertain the Chinese pilgrim as an honourable guest. On his return from India in 644, Huien Tsang met the same ruler again at Und, his winter headquarters, and was again warmly received and entertained.

In the beginning of the eighth century, probably in 719 A. D., Hing-ye, according to Chinese sources, came to power in this part of the country. He was entitled Tele, Telete, Tekin or Tagin. Al-Beruni, the great Muslim traveller, philosopher and geographer, calls this ruling dynasty by the name of Turkan Shahi, Zaibals, Ratbils or Rantbils. Again, according to the same writer, the first king of this line was Beratagin and the last Lakaturman, who was cruel and dissipated. These characteristics ultimately led to his ruin, for his chief minister, Kalar, an influential Brahman, putting himself at the head of a popular uprising, succeeded in dethroning and imprisoning the king, probably in 850 A. D. Kalar, thereupon usurping the throne, laid the foundation of a new dynasty known by the name of Brahman Shahi, Kabul Shahi or Rayans of Kabul. The Ratbils professed Buddhism, while the Brahman Shahi were Hindus by faith and worshipped Shiva and other Hindu dieties.

We do not know exactly when the Ratbils were forced to quit their capital at Capisa and shift to Kabul. According to Wou-Kong, another Chinese pilgrim, who visited the country between 751-769 A. D., Capisa was still the seat of the local government and a flourishing town. Probably this state of affairs continued until 793 A. D., when Ibrahim Ibn Jabal, under orders from Fazal

bin Yahya, governor of Khurasan, led an expedition against Capisa *via* the Ghorban Valley. It is said that during this raid Capisa, the royal city, sustained irreparable losses and was literally wiped out of existence. This made the Ratbils shift their capital to Kabul.

There is again much difference of opinion as to the original site of this historical town. Probably the old city of Kabul lay to the south of the modern capital on the river Lohgar, somewhere near the present village of Shivaki. Kabul continued to be the seat of government both of the Ratbils and later on of the Kabul Shahis, until the end of the ninth century, when the Saffarids of Seistan took it over and destroyed its temples. The seat of government was then shifted to Gardez, where a fresh wave of invasions by the Saffarids made the Kabul Shahis quit Gardez and move eastward to Uhind, and then, a little later, under the pressure of the Ghaznavids, to the interior of the Punjab.

PART TWO

# THE MUSLIM PERIOD

CHAPTER XI

# THE MUSLIM PERIOD

**The Coming of Islam.**

At the dawn of the seventh century A. D., the regions from the North Sea to the Persian Gulf were engulfed in strife or crumbling in decay, morally as well as spiritually. The Byzantine empire was fighting for its very existence against the Persians and the Avars ; Gaul was sent by the fratricidal war of two Frankish chieftains ; England was parcelled into warring kingdoms of Angles, Saxons and Jutes ; while the once mighty Egypt had fallen under foreign domination. Amid such chaos the civilized heritage of Greece was in danger of perishing ; historic towns with their precious libraries were sacked and destroyed, scholars were killed or hounded from place to place.

Into this Dark Age a ray of light borne by an ancient Semitic people penetrated from the wilderness. From the sandy plateaus of Arabia spread a new force that was to build a mighty bridge between the classic and the modern worlds.

In 622 the Arabian Prophet Hazrat Mohammed was forced to leave Mecca and to take refuge in Yathrib (later named Medina). Hardly a century elapsed before Palestine, Syria, Egypt and the whole of Northen Africa, and even distant Spain and Southern France, had been brought under the banner of Islam. In the East, too, the warriors of Islam succeeded in reducing Persia, Baluchistan, Sindh and a greater part of Central Asia. But these Arabs had a difficult time when they entered Afghanistan in pursuit of the fugitive Persian monarch, Yazdigird III, who after losing his motherland, had taken refuge in northern Afghanistan.

No nation or race has shown more dauntless courage or more

indomitable energy than the Afghans in their wars against the Arabs. Within the space of fifty years the Arabs attacked Kabul no less than six times, but all their efforts, in spite of superiority in numbers and equipment, were frustrated. Each time they had to fall back, after sustaining heavy losses in men and in materiel ; and Kabul retained its independence under the Kabul Shahis until 871 A. D., when it was reduced by Yakub bin Laith, the founder of the Saffarid dynasty. And all this was achieved at a time when the country had no political or religious unity.

Afghanistan on the eve of Muslim conquest resembled Greece before Macedonia's rise into power. There was the same incapacity in both regions to create a political union. There was no central government. Each one fought singly, bravely, but no one showed any particular foresight. The western part of the country was in the hands of the Sassanians, while the rest of the country had been parcelled out among a large number of warring chiefs, too jealous to combine hands against a common enemy. The religious life was also fragmentary and confused. Zoroastrianism still held its sway over most of the northwestern part of the country, where a few Assyrian communities were also trying to disseminate Nestorian Christianity. The majority of the tribes living south and east professed Buddhism and Brahmanism. Besides, there were innumerable cults, mostly of fireworshippers. Afghanistan was, therefore, over-ripe for political and religious revolution and unification. And this was wrought by Islam.

In 645 A. D. Yazdigird III of Persia, after his repeated setbacks at the hands of the Arabs, took refuge in northern Afghanistan. A contingent of 20,000 men led by Ahnif bin Qais pursued the fugitive monarch into Afghanistan. It is strange to note that as long as Yazdigird lived and the struggle between the Arabs and the Persians dragged on, the Afghans took no part in it, but rather keenly watched the course of events from a distance. But soon after the death of Yazdigird, a deadly contest ensued between the Arabs and the Afghans in the various parts of the country.

The Persian king and his colleague, the Khaqan, received a crushing defeat near Merv. The unfortunate monarch, fleeing from the battlefield, came to Tocharistan (northeastern Afghanistan) and appealed to China to assist him in his struggle against the Arabs. But the Chinese emperor was in no mood to send his forces to such a distant place. In his despair Yazdigird went to Balkh in the vain hope that the people would gather around him and fight his enemy. Ahnif, availing himself of the opportunity led a second expedition against Yazdigird. A battle took place in the vicinity of Balkh. Once more the Persian monarch was defeated and forced to seek safety in flight. He took refuge in the Murghab basin in the house of a miller, where he was killed. With his death, the Sassanian empire came to an end.

It was now the time for the Afghans to rise against the Arabs in defence of their motherland. In 652 A. D., during the caliphate of Usman, an expedition was sent into Khurasan under Abdullah bin Amir, one of the famous Arab generals, to quell these national risings. Abdullah made Nishapur his military headquarters, and from this base he sent expeditionary forces out in various directions. One of these under Rabi bin Zayad went to Herat, and a second, under Abdur Rahman, besieged and finally captured Zaranj (now Zahidan). Using Seistan as his advance base, Abdur Rahman took the direction of Zamindawar, where in a temple devoted to the sun-god Zuz (or Zur), he found an idol with ruby eyes (653 A. D.).

When Amir Muawiyah of the Ommeyad dynasty came to power, he appointed Abdullah ibn Amir the governor of Khurasan. By this time Herat and Balkh had reasserted their independence. Abdullah, after reducing the last-named city, in retaliation issued orders for the demolition of the famous temple of Naobahar (Nava Vihara).

In 706 A. D., however, the great Muslim conqueror, Qutaiba, entered Merv and called upon the inhabitants to unite in a religious war against non-believers. He marched victoriously as far as the borders of the Chinese Turkestan. Niazak, a prince of Badghis, taking advantage of his long absence, raised the standard

of revolt (709 A. D.). He sent his treasures and valuables to the king of Kabul for safekeeping, and attempted to unite all the local rulers against the Arabs. He failed in his attempt because the rising did not take the form of a national upheaval. It was, therefore, easily put down, and Niazak, who had surrendered on peace terms, was executed.

The first serious attempt to take Kabul was made by Yazid bin Zayad, who with his brother, Bu-Obaidah, led an expedition against Kabul. It, too, was a complete failure. In the battle that ensued the Arabs sustained a severe defeat, and a large number of them were either killed in action or taken prisoners. Yazid himself fell in the fighting, while his brother was imprisoned along with a large number of other Arab officers. The Caliph had to pay a million dinars to the king of Kabul as ransom for his army. Shortly afterwards another expedition for the same purpose under Abdul Aziz ibn Abdullah, had to fall back after sustaining heavy losses both in men and in materiel.

When Abdul Malik became Caliph, he appointed Hajjaj bin Yusif governor of the eastern provinces. Hajjaj equipped another expedition under Abdullah to take Kabul. It is said that the king of Kabul, on learning that a large army was coming against him, was ready to a pay a million dirhams if Abdullah would give up his expedition and return to his base. But the Arab general, puffed up by his recent success into an overweening confidence in his own abilities, both as a soldier and as a statesman, rejected the offer. The king of Kabul did not think it advisable to meet this grand army in the open field. Falling back on his capital, he destroyed the villages enroute, so that the enemy should not be able to get provisions for their large army on their way to Kabul. When the Arabs reached the hilly part of the country, they found their retreat cut off. Abdullah, realizing his folly, sued for peace. He was allowed to return on payment of three hundred thousand dinars, and the pledge that he would not meddle with the affairs of the king of Kabul any more. Hajjaj, on hearing these humiliating terms, disavowed the treaty, dismissed Abdullah, and appointed Musa bin Talha in his place.

Obaidullah ibn Abibakr, under instructions from Musa, made another attempt to reduce Kabul. The king of Kabul again took to old tactics. When the Arab commander reached the hilly tract of the country, he suddenly found himself cut off from his base. He was, therefore, forced to make good his escape on payment of seven hundred thousand dinars.

A little later Hajjaj sent a third expedition of 10,000 men under Abdurrahman Ibn Ashas to reduce Kabul. The king of Kabul was again ready to pay annual tribute provided his country was spared. But the offer was declined. When winter set in, Abdurrahman found out that further advance was suicidal. He wrote to Hajjaj requesting him to allow him to postpone further advance until spring. Hajjaj reprimanded Abdurrahman for his cowardice, whereupon the latter rebelled, made peace with the Kabul Shahi and returned with all haste to Basra to punish the haughty governor for his impudency. In the battle that ensued, Abdurrahman was defeated and had to seek safety in flight. He took refuge with the king of Kabul, but died shortly afterwards. This was perhaps the last attempt of the Arabs in this direction, and Kabul remained in the hands of the Kabul Shahis until the end of the ninth century A. D., when it was reduced by Yakub bin Laith, the Saffarid, as has already been related.

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CHAPTER XII

# INFLUENCE OF ISLAM ON AFGHAN CULTURE

Though the Arabs failed in their attempt to conquer the whole of Afghanistan by force of arms, yet their missionary activities had a far-reaching effect in this country. The nobility of character and conduct of these early Muslims paved the way for the spread of Islam in Afghanistan. Even those who did not accept the new faith could not help but be influenced by Islam and its lofty philosophy. In the medley of religions, beliefs and superstitions that existed in Afahanistan at this time, Islam infused a new life and worked a mighty change in the social and cultural life of the people. It swept off the smouldering debris of decaying systems and supplanted them with a culture which still pulsates with life and vigour. The Islamic conception of Tawhid (the unity of One Supreme God), equality and the brotherhood of man could not help but revolutionize the intellectual outlook of the people. The new democratic faith, setting little value on birth, broke down all social barriers, and came as a liberator of the depressed classes, who had been living under tyrannies of social and political inequities for centuries.

Islam gave political and social solidarity and cohesion to Afghanistan. The heterogeneous tribes, for the first time in their history, were linked together by a common faith. Henceforth their wars had a religious tinge—*Jehad* or crusade. Those who fell in battle in pursuit of a righteous cause attained martyrdom, while the survivors got the proud title of *Ghazi.*

In the domain of culture, the contact with Islam had far-reaching effects. The Arabs had by now assimilated and developed the cultures of such ancient peoples as the Egyptians, Greeks,

Syrians, Mesopotamians and Persians. This noble heritage was now brought into contact with the local culture and out of these two a new culture came into being, which may rightly be called the main source of the Afghan culture of today.

Arabic, or more properly, the language of the Kuran enriched the local dialects and languages and gave them more flexibility, rhythm and fluency. Some of the early Afghan writers used Arabic as their medium of expression. This clearly shows that Arabic took the place of a second language in the country. Arabic is still the religious language throughout Afghanistan, as was Latin in the Catholic Church of the Middle Ages.

Indeed, it is not possible to trace fully the extent of the Islamic cultural influence over the Afghans, but nowhere else is it shown so vividly and so picturesquely as in their customs, in the intimate details of domestic life, in the fashions of dress, in the ways of cooking, in marriage and burial ceremonies, and in the celebration of festivals and fairs.

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CHAPTER XIII

# NATIONAL MOVEMENTS AGAINST THE ARABS

The Afghans embraced Islam willingly and indeed they did not lose by conversion. During the early part of the Abbaside Caliphate most of the key positions were held by the Khurasanis. The Arabs were forced to borrow from Khurasan its system of taxation, local administration and even its form of centralized government. The Abbaside Caliphate undoubtedly owed its very existence and its most enduring glory to the Khurasanis. But from the very beginning the Khurasanis emphasized the importance of their own culture and personality by retaining their own language or languages, and their own customs and trend of thought. Being Muslims they borrowed the language of the Kuran and some of them even wrote in that language, using the Arabic script. They also added approximately one-third of the Arabic words to their vernacular languages but at the same time kept their peculiar conjugation of verbs and their own way of making sentences. It was apparent from the very beginning that they were in no way prepared to live under a foreign yoke or to accept Arab domination in other fields. They wanted to preserve their individuality and the right to shape their own destiny. From the time of the Second Caliph, when the Arab forces entered Afghanistan in pursuit of the fugitive Sassanian monarch, right on up to the days of the Abbasides, this struggle of liberation was carried on with ever-increasing zeal.

The first to enter the field was Abu Muslim. A man of extraordinary ability and undaunted courage; he was peculiarly fitted for the onerous task of ousting the Ommeyades and of raising the Abbasides to power. One historian says about the

capabilities of this national leader : "The greatest event could hardly disturb the serenity of his countenance. He received the news of the most important victories without expressing the symptoms of joy, and under the great reverses of fortune he never betrayed the slightest uneasiness ; and when angered, he never lost his self-command." His capacity for organizing troops and administering public affairs was enormous.* In the events of discontent and disaffection now prevailing throughout the country, his keen eyes and penetrating insight found immense material for the execution of his long-cherished design, and Khurasan, his nativeland, soon became the centre of this national movement.

Nasr, the Ommeyad governor of Khurasan was a capable and vigorous administrator, and was not unaware of what was going on. But he could not cope successfully with the storm that was now rising on all sides, headed by a national leader of exceptional ability and vast resources.

Abu Muslim was neither for the Abbasides nor for the Ommeyades. He was a nationalist to the core of his heart and wanted to liberate his country at any cost. Being farsighted, he made full use of the jealousies and rivalries raging between these two Houses for the execution of his plans. He knew he could not fight the Ommeyades singlehanded ; he must support the cause of the Abbasides in the furtherance of his national aims. With this in view he called upon his countrymen to rise against the usurping Ommeyades. After he had secured the adherence of the Abbasides, he raised the banner of revolt on the 25th of Ramazan, 129 A. H. (746 A.D.). Vast multitudes clothed in black, the sign of mourning for those who had sacrificed their lives in this noble cause, now flocked to his standard. The Kingmaker then commenced his memorable march towards Syria. The Ommeyad governors were expelled from Herat and Merv, and with this the whole of Farghana and Khurasan fell into the hands of Abu Muslim and his partisans. Nasr, the Ommeyad governer of Khurasan, flying towards Fars, died on the way.

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*A Short History of the Saracens, by Ameer Ali, p. 172

Abu Muslim's forces pursued the fugitive Arabs closely. No quarter was given and no mercy shown. Qutaibah, one of Abu Muslim's generals, accompanied by Khalid bin Bermak, an Afghan noble of Balkh, whose descendants, Bermicides became so famous in the Abbaside period, now was entrusted with this duty. The cities of Iraq and Persia fell one by one into the hands of the nationalists. This roused the aged Caliph, Merwan II, the lost of the Ommeyades, to action. With an immense army numbering no less then 120,000, he marched to meet the invading force. A sanguinary battle took place on the left bank of the River Zab, in the vicinity of a village called Khushaf. The Ommeyades were put to rout with great slaughter, and Merwan was forced to flee. The pursuit of the fugitive monarch was fierce and unrelenting until at last he was traced in a small Christian chapel, on the western bank of the Nile. Age had not dimmed the courage of the luckless Caliph. To sell his life dearly, he came out of his hiding place sword in hand and dashed towards the enemy's ranks. But he soon fell dead transfixed with a lance. With the death of Merwan II the glorious days of the Ommeyades in the east ended. Abul Abas, nicknamed As-Saffah (the cruel), was elected Caliph, whose House, the Abbaside, was destined to rule for more than five centuries until 1258 A. D.

Abu Muslim, in recognition of his services, was made the governor of Khurasan, while Khalid bin Bermak, was appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer. After the death of As-Saffah in 754, A. D. his brother Jaffar Mansur came to the throne. Shortly after, Abdullah bin Ali, his uncle and governor of Syria, rose against him. Mansur directed Abu Muslim to crush the rebellion. The task was performed splendidly and in the shortest possible space of time. But the brilliant success of Abu Muslim raised a host of enemies who poisoned the mind of the Caliph against him.

Abu Muslim now wanted to return to his duties in Khurasan, of which he had practically made himself king. He had a large following, some of whom looked upon him as endowed with supernatural power. He could, by raising his finger, destroy the

lofty edifice of the Abbaside which he had built up with his own hands. The Caliph, too, was not unaware of the fact. He looked upon Abu Muslim as a source of great danger to his House. The removal of such a formidable rival, therefore, became the foremost consideration of Mansur. He did not wish to dismiss Abu Muslim from his post, for that would naturally force him into open rebellion. At the same he did not want him to return to his nativeland, where he would be in the midst of his own people and partisans. He, therefore, offered him the governorship of Syria. But Abu Muslim was shrewd enough to see through the nefarious designs of the Caliph. Declining the royal order, he, with his victorious army, commenced his return march to Khurasan. Mansur did not have the heart to oppose him openly, so he had recourse to unfair means. By lavish promises Abu Muslim was induced to change his mind and to visit the court at Baghdad. In the beginning he was warmly received and honourably entertained. But a few days later he was invited to the palace and treacherously murdered. With his death, the first attempt to establish an independent government in Khurasan came to an end, but his noble example was not forgotten ; others followed in his footsteps. Of these the Bermaks* (or Bermecides) are worthy of every praise.

Bermak was a native of Balkh. His family was in charge of the great fire-temple, called Nao-Bahar or more properly Nava Vihara. Khalid bin Bermak, as mentioned above took a prominent part along with Abu Muslim in the national rising against the Ommeyades. He occupied a distinguished position under Saffah and Mansur. Khalid's son, Yahya, was at one time the governor of Armenia. Mehdi, son of Mansur, entrusted him with the education and the upbringing of his son, Harun-ur-Rashid. When

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*According to Schaw the word Bermak comes from Sanskrit Para Maka, meaning superior, preferably a man of high rank. The word still survives in Pashtu in the form of Parmakh with the same meaning.

The temple, the trusteeship of which was in the hands of this family, was originally the centre of Buddhism, where monks from China, India and Afghanistan assembled. Even Indian rajas and Chinese rulers were occasionally visiting the place.



*H. E. Sardar-i-Aala Ali Mohammed*

*Mr. Ali Mohammed, the present Minister of Court, has a long and glorious record of selfless service to the country. A man of high literary taste, he has played a prominent part in the educational development of his countrymen. Starting as a teacher at the Habibia School, Mr. Ali Mohammed soon rose to the eminent position of Mininster of Education by dint of his ability, hard and sincere work. Even when he held the exalted post of the First Deputy Prime Minister, he did what he could possibly do for the educational uplift of his compatriots.*

*Mr. Ali Mohammed is a strong supporter of the present progressive movement. Believing in the spiritual vitality of Afghan legacy, he wants to see a new edifice built on Afghanistan's rich cultural heritage. Even now though full of years and honours, Mr. Ali Mohammed takes an active part in all social gatherings, and occasionally visits schools and colleges to supervise an examination or to have a chat with the younger generation.*

his ward attained majority and had been nominated successor to the Caliphate, he was made his counsellor. Rashid used to call him "father" as a mark of affection and respect. When he came to power, Yahya was appointed Vazier and given absolute power. His administration was wise, firm and benevolent; the well-being of the people was his primary duty. His sons, Fazl, Jaffar, Musa and Mohammed were also men of great ability, who possessed exceptional capacities for administration. All of them were holding important posts at this time and were gaining in popularity by honestly discharging their duties.

Later on, when Yahya, owing to old age retired from his post, Jaffar was entrusted with the high office of his father, the duties of which he discharged with signal success. For more than seventeen years this remarkable and gifted family governed the vast Abbaside Empire with fidelity and honesty. Thanks to their able administration, people were happy and prosperous, the empire grew rich, national wealth increased, its prestige was considerably enhanced, and the arts of civilized life were cultivated everywhere. But unfortunately, their lavish charity, their kindness and benefactions, which had made the Bermicides the idols of the masses, raised a host of enemies, who were determined to bring about their fall by every means at their command.

Gradually they succeeded in poisoning the mind of Rashid against the members of this family. Their faithful services were forgotten in the blind fury of suspicion and despotic anger. Suddenly one night orders were issued for the execution of Jaffar, and for the imprisonment of the aged Yahya and his other sons. Their property was confiscated and even in prison they were harshly and cruelly treated. The old and faithful Yahya could no long bear this treatment and died shortly afterwards. Three years later, his accomplished son, Fazl, also followed him to the grave, and with this the glorious days of the Abbasides were also over.

CHAPTER XIV

# RISE OF NATIONAL DYNASTIES

After the death of Harun-ur-Rashid in 806 A. D., the Abbaside Empire could not maintain its integrity and the process of decay began even before the end of the first quarter of the ninth century. The first to strike a blow was Tahir, a native of Pushanj or Fushanj (a town near Herat), and a trusted general of Mamun (813-833), who in recognition of his services was awarded in 820 A. D. the governorship of Khurasan. He assumed independence for all practical purposes. Though he did not live long enough to reap the fruits of his labour, his dynasty was destined to last until 872 A. D. when it was followed by another native dynasty called the Saffarids.

The founder of this short-lived dynasty was Yakub, a brazier of Seistan. He succeeded his patron as governor of the province and was soon able to rule a vast country extending from the heart of Persia to Zabul, Kabul and Sindh. The Saffarids, in their turn, were subdued by the Samanids, who made Bukhara their capital (903). They were the descendants of Saman, a Zoroastrian noble of Balkh. This dynasty was destined to rule over Afghanistan, Transoxiana and a large part of Persia for about 120 years. Almost all the princes of this line were most liberal patrons of learning who promoted the cause of national literature to the utmost of their power.

The age of the Samanids is characterized by a large number of poets and writers who have left their indelible mark upon the literature of the time. Bukhara, their capital, together with the city of Samarkand, rivalled and sometimes even eclipsed Baghdad, the metropolis of Islam and the capital city of the Abbasides, as centres of learning and culture. Historians mention the names

of a multitude of poets who shed lustre upon the courts of the Samanids. Of these Shakur Balkhi is the oldest literary representative of this period. He invented the famous verse-form known as Mathnawi, or double-rhymed poetry, and also was the first poet to compose Rubai, or quatrain, which in the later centuries became the most popular vehicle of mystical thought. He may be fairly considered the forerunner of Daqiqi in Mathnawi.

Shahid Balkhi was another popular poet of this period. But Rodaki, whose real name is Abu Abdullah Jaffar, tops the list. He was blind from his birth, but had an extraordinary memory, and learned the Kuran by heart when he was hardly eight years old. Besides from being a poet, he had a melodious voice and was skilful in the use of harp and lute. He died in 941 A. D. Of his skill both as a poet and singer an interesting story is related. Nasr II, the Samanid Prince of Bukhara, once happened to visit Badghisat, a place of natural beauty north of Herat. The king was so pleased by its scenic charms that he would not leave it even after a stay of full two years. The courtiers, homesick as they were, approached Rodaki, the poet-laureate to see if he could do anything to induce Nasr to return to Bukhara. Whereupon the poet, complying with the request, improvised a poem, and when he recited it before the Prince, the result was marvelous. It is said that Nasr was so moved that he came down from his throne, mounted the horse of a sentinel on duty and set off for Bukhara in such haste that he did not even care to put on his boots. The poem runs thus :

The Muliyan stream we call to mind,  
We long for those dear friends left behind ;  
The sands of Oxus, toilsome though they may be,  
Beneath my feet were soft as silk to me.  
Glad at the return of friends the Oxus deep,  
Up to our girths the laughing waves shall leap.  
Long live Bukhara ! Be thou of good cheer,  
Joyous towards thee haseth the Amir,

The Moon's the Prince, Bukhara is the sky ;
O sky, the moon shall light thee by and by.
Bukhara is the mead, the Cypress he ;
Receive at last, O mead, the Cypress tree.*

Another very interesting and conspicuous literary figure of this period is a young poetess, Rabia by name. She was born at Balkh, but the date of her birth is not correctly known. She is supposed to be a contemporary of Rodaki. Her father, Kaab, was one of the early Arab immigrants who settled in Afghanistan. Rabia's matchless beauty and personal charms together with her literary accomplishments soon spread her fame far and wide, and she had a large number of suiters from among very rich and influential families. But her heart was somewhere else, for she had passionately fallen in love with a slave, whose name was Yaktash. This handsome Turkish youth returned the advances of his beloved with equal ardour, and their love soon became the gossip of high and low. This the orthodox would not allow to continue. Finding herself strongly opposed in her intention to marry the object of her love, her wounded heart and delicate spirit turned away from worldly life, and sought solace in meditation and in composing poems of divine love. Her brother could not tolerate even this. She was condemned to death. One of her blood vessels was cut open and she was thrown into a dungeon, where after a few hours she passed away peacefully due to loss of blood. It is related that before she breathed her last, she composed a Rubai, and using her delicate fingers, she wrote it with her blood on the wall of the cell. It reads thus :

> I wish that God may make you fall in love with a stone-hearted and unkind person like yourself, so that you may know the pangs of love and separation. It is only then that you will realize my position and appreciate my feelings.

Her tragic and cruel death aroused general sympathy in her favour and she became the symbol of true love. Yaktash could

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*Prof. Brown's Literary History of Persia, Vol. II, p. 15.

not bear her separation, but before committing suicide on the resting place of his beloved, he succeeded in punishing her cruel brother with death.

Rabia was a gifted poetess, and her exquisite verses take us to a high pitch of mystic thought. We catch the note of passionate sobbings, and a deep unexplainable pathos in her lines. At times she soars above this material world to those heights of contemplation and ecstasy where the real is lost in the ideal, and visions take the place of facts. An inextinguishable hope of everlasting union with God, whom she calls the Spirit of Love, pervades in her poems.

This last characteristic of Rabia's poety is the dominant feature of Persian theosophy. The soul, turning away from things seen, yearns after Divine Love. This was the dawn of mysticism in Persian poetry. So, before we proceed further it would not be out of place to write something about the origin and influence of mysticim in Islam, which changed the whole course and aspect of Muslim outlook and thought, and left a deep impression on the social and cultural life of the Afghans.

CHAPTER XV

# TASSAWUF (MYSTICISM OR SUFISM)

There is a great difference of opinion among scholars as to the origin of the word Tassawuf. Saf-i-Awwal, the first row in prayer; As-hab-i Suffa, the companions of the Prophet who possessed no worldly property and passed their time on the platform of the mosque in Medina, like Salman-i-Fars, Abuzar and Abuhorera; and theosophy are the various derivations attributed to it. But etymologically they do not appear sound. It is now admitted that the word has its origin in the word Soof (wool), which was the common dress of the Sufis, also known as Pashmina-Posh.

A similar difference of opinion exists as to the origin of this movement. Professor Massignon, in a brilliant survey of the whole field of early Islamic mysticism, has sought to prove that the mystical movement was the direct heir of primitive Muslim ascetism, itself derived from the Kuran and the practice of the Prophet. This view is generally held by the Sufis themselves and they quote several verses of the Kuran and traditions of the Prophet in support of their claim. The mainstay of mysticism in Islam is the love of God. The ascetic is impelled to trust Him alone and to acquiesce entirely to His will. Union with God and detachment from all worldly things is the doctrine that inspires the Sufis. The life of man, according to Rumi, is capable of passing through three stages: immaturity, maturity and sacrifice (kham budam, pukhtah shodam, sokhtam—I was raw, then I reached the stage of consummation, and finally I was burned up (losing my identity). The first is the stage of unawareness or heedlessness, during which man is naturally entangled in sensuous things; is a tool in the hands of his animal drives and is incapable

of attaining perfection in the discipline of his morals, which is necessary to realize the supreme good. He cannot cultivate the heart of devotion to God, neither has he a staunch belief in Him, which is an essential attribute to reaching the goal. He does not possess the strength to bear indefatigably the burden of service to God. Neither is his mind purged of evil, nor can he free himself from worldly desires and sensuous cravings. He is given to trivial pleasures and regards eating, drinking and clothing only as the be-all and end-all of life. Thus he becomes fettered by worldly chains and allows himself to be governed by his whims and caprices. Such a person beholds the phenomena only; reality is hidden from his view. For him created things alone possess great importance.

Should a person choose to discard the things that cling to him of the sensuous world and wish to enter the mystic path for the purification of his soul and the perfection of his being, he is first to try to get out of these entanglements. He must commence practising self-remonstrance and austerity, so much so that a new light begins to dawn upon him. Contingent beings recede from his view and the reality of the Absolute Being begins to make its appearance. Gradually a stage is reached when worldly things disappear from his sight, and he sees and knows the reality of the Absolute Being alone. His dealings and business henceforth become connected with the Creator alone, as Bayazeed al-Bistami says:

> Since thirty years I talk with God alone and listen alone to what He says, people think that I talk to the created beings, and listen to what they say.

The technical term of the Sufis for this final stage is Fana (annihilation), a passing away, a state of utter unconsciousness of external things, a turning towards God and a turning away from the world. When one's heart develops this quality, one attains what is termed "Vilayat-i-Sughra" or lesser companionship. In this mental state the seeker neither sees nor knows nor identifies anyone other than God. In this state he exclaims: "The eye

doth not see anyone but Thee, I affirm this once, hundred times, a thousand times over and over again."

Such are the Sufis, who witness none but God and are always intoxicated with the wine of Divine Love. They are the elect ones, the chosen ones of God. They are the persons whom Hafiz of Shiraz eulogizes in these words:

"The abode of the dervish is the orchard of paradise,
To serve him is to gather the fruits of holiness,
The stately mansion of paradise, whose portals Ridwan keeps,
Is but a vision of the splendour of the bower the dervish dwells in."

The woman-saint, Rabia al Adwiya (d. 801 A. D.), singing in the same strain, says: "Love of God hath so absorbed me that neither love nor hatred of any other thing remains in my heart".

The Sufi movement began to be regarded with suspicion by the orthodox Ulama and the authorities. This suspicion grew as the Sufi leaders became more advanced in their views and bolder in giving expression to them, and the rift seemed to be widening. Some attempts were made to silence them, but when these failed an example was made of one of the most prominent Sufis, Mansur al-Hallaj, a wool carder, who was arrested, imprisoned and executed on grave charges of heresy, for he would openly declare "I am God" (an-nal-haq). According to him, God, who in essence is love, created man after His own image, to the end that His creatures, loving him, may go through a special transformation, find the Divine image in himself, and thus attain union with Him. When Mansur was brought to be crucified, on seeing the scaffold and the nails, he turned to the people who had assembled there and uttered a prayer ending with these words:

"And these are Thy servants, who are gathered to slay me in zeal of Thy religion and in desire to win Thy favour. Forgive them O'God, and have mercy upon them; for verily if Thou hast revealed to them what Thou hast revealed to me, they would not have done what they have done; and if Thou hadst hidden from me that which

Thou hast hidden from them, I should not have suffered this tribulation. Glory unto Thee in whatever Thou doest, and glory unto Thee in whatever Thou willest."

In one of his verses Hallaj prays for his union with his Beloved and tries to utter his feelings of perfect harmony with Him in these words :

"Betwixt me and Thee there lingers an "it is I", that troubles me,
Ah, of Thy grace, take away this "I" from between us.
I am He whom I love, and He whom I love is I,
We are two spirits dwelling in one body.
If thou seest me, thou seest Him,
And if thou seest Him, thou seest both."

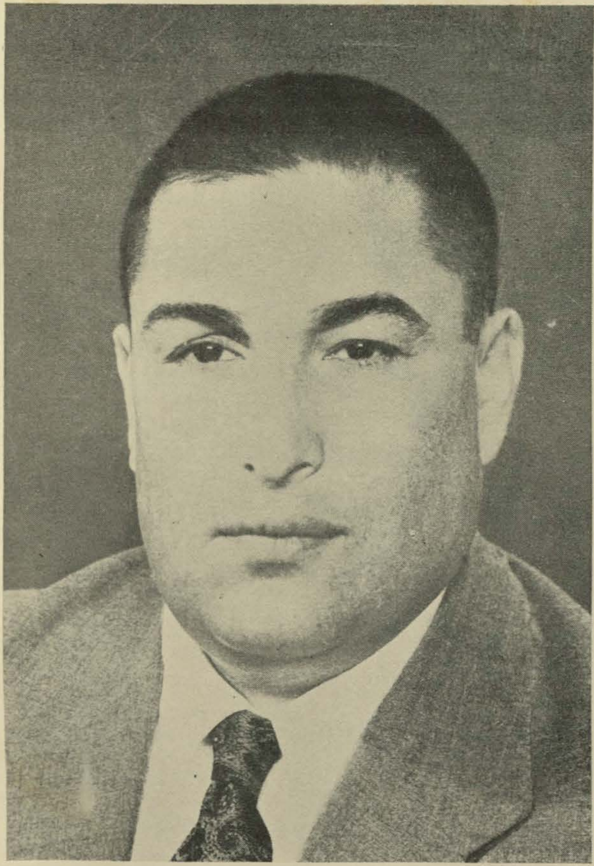
Maluana Jalal-ud-din Balkhi says in a similar tone :

"Happy the moment when we are seated together, Thou and I with two forms and with two figures but with one soul, Thou and I."

It was Imam Ghazali (Abu Hamid ibn Mohammed al Ghazali, 1058-1111 A. D., surnamed Hujjatul Islam—Islam's Convincing Proof) that brought about a reconciliation between Sufism and orthodoxy. Ghazali, who stands on a level with Augustine and Luther in religious insight and intellectual vigour, is considered to be the greatest scholar of his age. He shed on the rigidity of rites the rays of Divine Love, and gave a new life to the compulsory observances which tended to become mechanical. It was by his influence that Sufism attained a firm and assured position in the Church of Islam. His famous book on the subject "Revivification of Knowledge and Religion" has scarcely its equal in any other language.

Sufism has had a deep and lasting impression on the people of this country, and Afghanistan has produced a large number of Sufi poets, of these Khwaja Abdullah Ansar, Maulana Jalal-ud-din Balkhi, Avicenna, Hakim Sanai and Jami have attained world-wide fame.

Unfortunately, the golden age of mysticism in Islam was followed by an epoch of indescribable carnage and devastation, during which the Mongol barbarians (early in the thirteenth



*H. E. Sardar-i-Aali Dr. Ali Ahmad*

*Minister of Education and Second Deputy Prime Minister*

*A hard worker and a very capable administrator, Dr. Popal has spared no pains to promote education and to establish cultural institutions all over the country. During his tenure of office, a large number of schools for both sexes have come into being in different parts of Afghanistan and the number of students on roll has an increase of more than hundred per cent. Due to Dr. Popal's incessant efforts and encouragement, people all over the country now take a keen interest in the upbringing of their children on modern lines. One comes forward to donate a sum of money to meet the construction of a new school, another allots a piece of land, while a third gives up his own private house to accomodate an eductional institution.*

*Fortunately, the Minister has a team of young, energetic and enthusiastic educationists on his staff to help him carry out his extensive educational programme. So rapid is the progress in this line that facts and figures of today may get out-of-date by the time these are released by the press.*

century A. D.) swept across Asia, leaving only terror, misery and chaos behind them. They so effectively stamped out the fire of learning in this area that with the lapse of seven centuries it has not fully recovered and probably will never be able to make good the loss of its fine libraries and its rich literary traditions. On the other hand, this wholesale destruction had a far-reaching effect on the outlook of those who were fortunate enough to survive this catastrophe. In nations, as in individuals, intense and prolonged sufferings demand and anodyne, and this was now sought in complete retirement from worldly affairs—in repentence and self-mortification. The few, who had escaped this general slaughter, became extremely pessimistic and fatalistic, which naturally contributed to a large extent to the moral and material degradation and degeneration of the Muslims all over the world.

The Western world indirectly gained by this wholesale destruction and the changed outlook of the Muslims. The Ranaissance of Europe might have been well delayed for more than one century had this catastrophe not happened in the East. The centres of learning and arts shifted from the East to the West and many a student set out on a journey of a thousand miles or more in quest of knowledge and teachers. Vast and tedious journeys were undertaken by young men who left their homes practically penniless to sit at the feet of a chosen master and acquire knowledge.

CHAPTER XVI

# CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT DURING THE GHAZNAVID PERIOD (963-1186 A. D.)

The mighty kingdom of the Samanids experienced the usual fate. In the last decade of the tenth century A. D. two Turkish families divided it between themselves. The Ilak Khans of Turkestan, who captured Bukhara in 990 A. D., and who nine years later, gave the final blow to the Samanids, became masters of all the territories lying to the north of the Oxus. The portion of the Samanid kingdom lying to the south of that river together with eastern Persia passed into the hands of the Yamini dynasty, better known to the modern students of history as the Ghaznavids.

Alaptagin, the Samanid governor of Khurasan, quarrelling with his master, seized Zabulistan with its capital Ghazni from Amir Abu Bakr Lawik in 963, and laid the foundation of a small independent kingdom, which was destined to expand into a vast and powerful empire and to last for a period of about two hundred years (up to 1186 A. D.).

Alaptagin, dying shortly afterwards, was succeeded by his son, Ishaq. After the death of this prince in 966 A. D., Balatagin, the commander of the Turkish troops, came to power. Subaktagin, who had married the daughter of Alaptagin, served loyally both Ishaq and Balatagin. When the reign of the latter came to an end (in 972), Pirai, a slave of Alaptagin, usurped the throne. But the new ruler was a cruel and relentless monarch, so the people rose against him and invited Abu Ali Lawik, son of Abu Bakr Lawik, to invade Ghazni and to rescue them from the clutches of this tyrant. At the same time the Kabul Shahi, whose kingdom extended to the Hindu Kush, and who looked upon the establish-

ment of a powerful Muslim kingdom so close to his borders with disfavour made common cause with Abu Ali Lawik against Pirai. When the allied forces reached Charkh, a place in the Lohgar Valley, on one of the routes from Kabul to Ghazni, they were suddenly attacked by Subaktagin, the commander of the Ghazni forces, who killed a large number of them and took many prisoners together with ten elephants. The victory greatly enhanced Subaktagin's prestige in the public's eyes, so much so that they rose against Pirai, and having dethroned him, raised Subaktagin to power (977 A. D.).

Subaktagin is looked upon as the real founder of the Ghaznavid dynasty. He enlarged the boundaries of his kingdom and added Bust, Dawar, Qusdar, Bamian and Ghore to it. He also had frequent clashes with the Kabul Shahis of Ohind.

Jaipal of the Kabul Shahi, seeing Muslim power extending and closing in on India, organized a large force, including a large number of war-elephants, and in 979 set out to meet Subaktagin and his young and energetic son, Mahmud. The battle took place somewhere in the Laghman valley. It continued for several days, during the course of which there were hailstones, blasts and thunderstorms. The Hindus suffered severely from the intense cold of the mountainous region, and after many had perished, they were obliged to surrender to save themselves from complete annihilation. Jaipal agreed to pay a large indemnity before he was allowed to return to India with the remnant of his grand army. But, on reaching Lahore and finding himself secure, he repudiated the treaty, and had the audacity to fling into prison the men whom Subaktagin had sent to fetch the money. Enraged at this treacherous conduct, Subaktagin promplty led an army against the Indian prince to avenge the insult. Neither was Jaipal idle. Collecting an army of more than one hundred thousand, besides the contingents supplied by the Rajas of Delhi, Ajmir and many other states, he marched north to meet his adversary. Once more Laghman became a field of battle. The Hindus, after a short but well-contested engagement, were put to rout, leaving behind them their property, arms, provisions, elephants and horses.

Subaktagin, as a result of this victory, was able to annex the whole of the territory lying between Laghman and Peshawar. But he was not destined to live long, and died at Balkh in 997, at the age of fifty-six. His body was taken to Ghazni and interred there, where his tomb can still be seen.

Subaktagin was a king of great valour, who ruled his kingdom with equity and moderation. He left behind four sons—Mahmud, Ismail, Nasr and Yusif. Ismail, taking advantage of the absence of Mahmud who was then in Iran, declared himself king and in great haste left for the capital. On reaching there he lavished wealth indiscriminately on soldiers and officers to win them over to his side. Mahmud, on hearing the news of Ismail's assumption of the royal power, wrote a conciliatory letter, advising him to be content with the governorship of one of the provinces, Ismail not only rejected the offer, but made preparations to solve the issue by force of arms. After a short conflict, he was defeated, taken prisoner and was kept in confinement until his death.

**Sultan Mahmud (998-1030).**

Mahmud, on ascending the throne of Ghazni, was hardly twenty-seven years old, but even at this young age he showed great administrative ability and consummate statesmanship. He ruled for a period of thirty years, most of his time being spent in wars on different sectors. During the intervals he found time for the pursuit of useful art and knowledge, which has immortalized his name and fame.

The first two years of his reign were spent in consolidating his power, a task in which he showed great ability. In the remaining twenty-eight years, he built a vast and powerful empire, including Afghanistan, Kashmir, the whole of northern India, and a great portion of Iran. He has no less than a score of successful campaigns to his credit in Iran, India and Central Asia, but here we are not concerned with the political merits and military exploits of this sovereign. Although a great conqueror and a fine general, Mahmud was no less a great patron of arts and literature. Being himself a cultured man, he invited the literary luminaries and artists to his magnificent court at

Ghazni and did not fail to give them the most liberal encouragement. Due to royal patronage the modest town of Ghazni soon rose to a real city and above all a great centre of art and culture, the resort of the most brilliant scholars and savants of the age.

The Sultan himself would take part in the discussions of the poets and scholars and would listen to their compositions with great interest. Even in the midst of an ardous campaign, he snatched a brief interval to have a conversation with them, or to listen to a song or an enthralling quartain. It is also alleged that the Sultan himself was something of a poet. To him is ascribed an elegy, which he composed on the death of a young beautiful girl, Gulistan (Rose Garden), to whom the Sultan was attached. The following is a translation of it :

Since thou, O moon, beneath the dust dost lie,
The dust in worth is raised above the sky.
My heart rebels, "Be patient, heart" I cry,
"An All-just Lord doth rule, our destiny,
Earthy and of the earth is man : tis plain
What springs from dust to dust must turn again."

Among those who came to his court from different parts of Asia were some leading literary figures of the time, such as versatile Al Beruni—the mathematician, philosopher, astronomer, and Sanskrit scholar ; Utbi, the historian ; Farabi, the philosopher ; and Baihaqi, the author of the Tarikh-i-Subaktagin.

It was also a great age of poetry, and some of the poets that lived at Mahmud's court were well-known all over Asia, and are still regarded among the best of Persian poets. One of the most celebrated of these was Unsari, the poet-laureate, who is looked upon as the greatest genius of the age. Firishta says that four hundred poets and learned men, besides a large number of students of the University of Ghazni, acknowledged him as their master. But the most famous of all these was Firdausi, the author of world-famed Shahnama, the great epic poem, which has placed both Mahmud and the author among the immortals of history.

Below are short biographies of some of these literary figures and leaders in human thought.

**Al-Beruni.**

Abu Raihan bin Ahmad Al-Beruni was born in 973 A. D. and died at the age of seventy-five at Ghazni. The place of his birth is a matter of much controversy. Some are of the opinion that he was born in Sindh, at a place called Berun. But there is no such town or village either in the past or even now ; there is a Nirun or Nirun-Kot in the vicinity of the modern city of Hyderabad. Others contest that he was a native of Khwarizm (Khiva) and was born at Birun. Even the existence of such a town in Khwarizm is not yet established. Historians also differ as to the date of his birth, but generally they put it between 970 and 973 A. D.

We do not know much about his early life either. The first time we hear of him is at the court of Khwarizm, his native place, where he was held in great esteem by Mamoon, the last prince of the line. About 1000 A. D. he went to Gurgan and was warmly received by Shams-ul-Maali Qabus, the ruler of the place. Returning to his nativeland about 1010, he stayed there until 1017. It was at this time that the people of Khwarizm rose against Mamoon and succeeded in putting him to death. As the deceased prince was the brother-in-law of Sultan Mahmud (being married to his sister), this naturally aroused the anger of the Sultan. Leading an expedition in person, he captured Khwarizm and made it a part of his empire. The Sultan knew all about Al-Beruni as he had come to his court several times in connection with various embassies. He invited him as well as Avicena to his court ; the former accepted the invitation gladly, while the latter, averse to entering into controversy with Al-Beruni, with whom he differed on many points, and whose logical powers he was afraid to encounter, politely declined the offer.

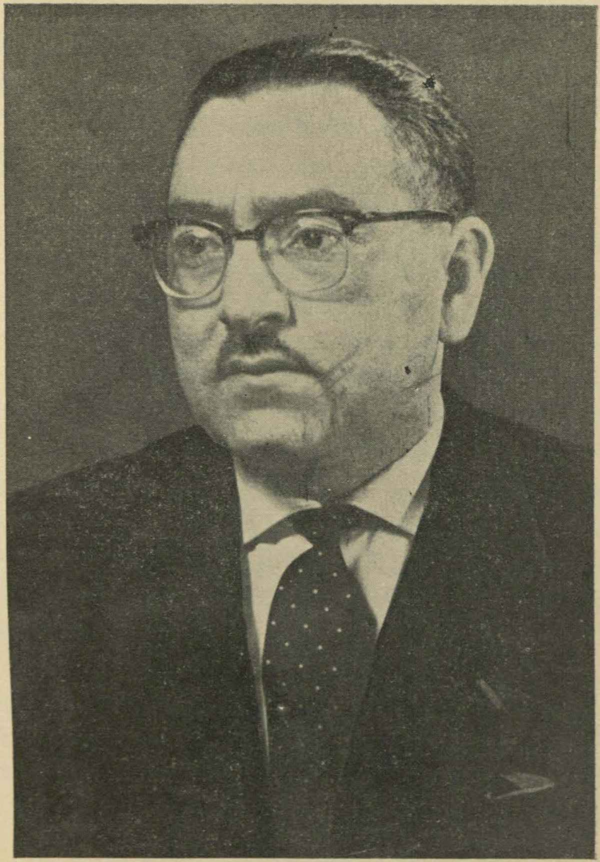
It was in the suite of Sultan Mahmud and of his son, Masud, that Al-Beruni had a chance to visit India, where he is said to have stayed a long time. This time was judiciously spent in learning Sanskrit and Indian philosophy. He took a keen and sincere

interest in acquiring Hindu learning. He conversed freely with Brahmans on Indian philosophy and was profoundly impressed by their intellectual subtlety and metaphysical speculations. In describing the monotheistic base of the Hindu religion, he tried to remove the false notions which existed among the Muslims about the Indians and their religious concepts. Dr. Sachau in his preface to "Indica" Al-Beruni's famous book on India, remarks :

> "The philosophy of India seems to have fascinated his mind, and the noble ideas of the Bhagavadgita probably came nearer to the standard of his own persuasions. Perhaps it was he who for the first time introduced the gems of Sanskrit literature into the world of Muslim readers." Appreciating the innumerable services, Al-Beruni contributed in compiling his book on India, Dr. Sachau says : "If in our days a man began studying Sanskrit and Hindu learning, with all the help afforded by modern literature and science, many years would pass before he would be able to do justice to the antiquity of India to such a degree of accuracy as Abu Raihan had done in his famous book "Indica."

This book, which he wrote after many years of hard study, documentation and travel in different parts of India, contains the essence and the flower of the knowledge about India and the Indians. In chapters dealing with theological and philosophical matters, he makes a comparative study of the doctrine and principles of Hinduism and the Islamic mysticism as well as the beliefs of the Greek philosophers. Here one can easily see the object of the author, which is not only to present Indian culture to his own people and to the Muslim world, but which is to work towards a definite goal, where he is at his best to prove concretely the oneness of the truth.

Al-Beruni was the first Muslim scholar to study the Puranas minutely and to make use of them in his books. On Indian astronomy, chronology, geography and astrology, he studied



*H. E. Sayid Mohammed Qasim Rishtiya*

*Sayid Qasim Rishtiya, the present Minister of Press, is a writer of outstanding merit. He has spent most of his time in the Press Department of which he is now the head. Rishtiya is an authority on Afghan history and his latest book "Afghanistan in the Nineteenth Century" is a work of immense research and minute study. It has been translated into Russian and English.*

*Sayid Rishtiya attaches great importance to the cultural heritage of the country. He believes that though the Afghan legacy has been outstripped by the tremendous advances of the Western world in the domains of science and technique, yet Afghan civilisation has not entirely spent itself as a spiritual force, and can still provide the present generation with inspiration and guidance. The lofty edifice of a new Afghanistan, he thinks, is to be laid on the solid foundation of her rich cultural heritage.*

many works in the original, and he probably had many conversations and discussions with prominent Hindu scholars on these topics. He gives in his "Indica" the title of these books along with the names of the scholars whom he met in India.

At the same time he was not ignorant of what had been achieved or was being achieved in this field in other parts of the world. Speaking of the progress of astronomy in Khwarizm, Al-Beruni says : "The solar calendar of Khwarizm was the most perfect scheme of measuring time with which he was acquainted, and it was maintained by the astronomers of that country that both the solar and lunar zodiacs had originated with them ; the divisions of the signs in their system being far more regular than those adopted by the Greeks or the Arabs.

A versatile scholar, Al-Beruni's works are said to have exceeded a camel-load. It was believed by the devout Muslims that Al-Beruni had received divine aid and inspiration in the composition of his works. The list of his books is alleged to have exceeded 60 pages.

Unfortunately, most of these works are lost, but from what has been spared we can easily deduce that he was well-versed in the different branches of science and literature of his time. Those most spoken of are astronomical tables, a treatise on precious stones, one on Materia Medica, an introduction to astrology, a treatise on chronology, the *History of India* (Indica), and *Qanun-i-Masudi* (Masudi's Canon), an astronomical and geographical work of much importance. For his last work he received from Sultan Masud, son of Mahmud, an elephant load of silver, which he, however, returned to the royal treasury.

What is peculiar of Al-Buruni is his frankness and love of truth. His lack of fanaticism and prejudice and his capacity for analysing, criticising and speaking clearly without fear is appreciated by both the scholars of the East and of the West. The Indian Brahmans, though differing with him on some important points, could not help appreciating his vast knowledge. They used to call him "Sagar", that is an ocean of knowledge.

Abu Raihan Al-Beruni wrote some works on poetry also. Professor S. K. Chaterjee of Calcutta University, paying homage to the spirit and the scientific works of this great orientalist, humanist, scientist and philosopher of nearly a thousand years ago, says: "Al-Beruni, one of the greatest scholars of history, has always attracted persons who take a broad view of human history and culture as an interconnected and integral link."

Al-Beruni was more than a mere scholar or indologist. He was perhaps the most erudite scholar of his age, knowing as he did all the literature available in two languages, Arabic and Persian, and a good deal of what was available in a third, Sanskrit. He was also familiar with the fundamental works of Greek thought and Greek science, to most of which he had access through Arabic translations. A humanist, his heart was free from racial or religious bias, and this raises his respect and reputation in the eyes of the whole world. Those were the days of the Crusades and the religious wars both in Europe and in Asia. But Al-Beruni stood for peace, for cultural relations, for universal justice and brotherhood. He had nothing but love and goodwill for all humanity.

**Firdausi.**

Firdausi, whose full name was Hasan bin Ishaq bin Sharaf, was born in 935 A. D. in a small village called Bazh in the Tabaran District of Tus in Khurasan. Prior to his arrival at Ghazni there is very little information about the great poet. He was of a more or less well-to-do family, and had one son and a daughter. The son died when the father was sixty-five, while the daughter survived him.

According to a popular legend one day a stranger from Nishapur, long bearded and poorly garbed, entered the King's garden in Ghazni. There the great poets of the court were having a private literary session, and the stranger acted as if he might join them. Not desiring the intrusion of this villager, the great Unsari, the poet-laureate, said to him: "O brother we are the

King's poets and none but poets of high reputation may enter our company. Each of us, if you desire, will compose a verse in the same rhyme. If you in your turn could supply the fourth verse of the quartrain, of course we will have no objection to admitting you in our society."

The stranger accepted the challenge, whereupon Unsari purposely chose a rhyme wherein three verses might easily be made, but a fourth he imagined would be impossible. He thus began the first line :

"Thine eyes are clear and blue as sunlit ocean."

Asjadi, another poet, continued :

"Their glance bewitches like a magic potion."

Then Farrukhi, the third of the great poets, said :

"The wounds they cause no balm can heal, nor lotion.

They then turned to the stranger asking him to supply the fourth verse, whereupon he alluding to a little-known episode in the legend of ancient kings, said :

"Deadly as those Give's spear dealt out to Poshan."

Being called upon to furnish an explanation of the allusion in this verse, the stranger, who was no other than Firdausi himself, displayed so great a knowledge of ancient lore, that the other three could not help praising him. Unsari took him to the Sultan and introduced him thus ; O, Lord ! Here at last is one competent to complete the work of versifying the national epic which was interrupted by the murder of the great, but ill-starred Daqiqi, some thirty years before."

There is a great divergence of opinion as to the date of the composition of the Shahnama. According to one legend, Firdausi completed the versification of the "Book of Kings" at the request of the Sultan. Others say that the Shahnama was completed in 990 A. D. about nine years before Mahmud's accession. The financial and political circumstances of the Samanids did not lead Firdausi to expect adequate reward for his masterpiece. He, therefore, waited for something to turn

up ; and, when the great Sultan came to power, the poet hastened to Ghazni, and after inserting in his Epic appropriate references to Mahmud's generosity and magnificence, duly presented him with the Shahnama. It is said that on a previous occasion, when Firdausi had recited some sections of the Shahnama, the Sultan had signified his appreciation by saying that each verse was worth a gold coin. This expression of Mahmud was probably taken by the poet to be a definite promise. When the great work was finished and presented to the Sultan and the poet was offered sixty thousand silver dirhams, he is said to have been chagrined to the extent that he distributed the sum amongst the attendants of the bath where he happened to be at this time, and after getting out of Mahmud's reach, composed a satire on him and left for his home in Tus.

Another version has it that after completing the Shahnama in seven volumes "after thirty-five years of hard toil" in the beginning of the year 999 A. D., Firdausi set out with it for Ghazni. He succeeded in getting the Prime Minister interested in his work and the Grand Vizier brought the seven volumes to the notice of the King, who expressed himself as immensely pleased with the great literary achievement. The Grand Vizier had many enemies at the court, and when Mahmud consulted them as to what he should give Firdausi for his efforts, they replied : "Give him fifty dirhams—and even that is too much."

Impressed by these imputations, Mahmud paid the poet 20,000 dirhams. This bitterly disappointed Firdausi. He went to a public bath and on coming out divided the money between the bathman and the *sherbet* seller. Then taking the Shahnama with him, Firdausi went to Tus and thence to Tabaristan where he wrote a satire on the Sultan. The King, it is related, at last made amends for his mistake. He sent sixty thousand gold coins with a robe of honour ; but when the belated present reached Tus, the dead body of the poet was being lowered in the grave. The emissaries of the Sultan desired the money to be given to Firdausi's daughter, but the latter refused it haughtily.

The story of the satire is also said to be fabricated, probably by the Seljuks, who had succeeded the Ghaznavids to power and were trying their best to damage the prestige of the Sultan and his House. The court of the Sultan, it is true, was not free from intrigues and mischief-mongers, but it is difficult to believe that a person of Firdausi's exemplary principles could have stooped so low as to write a satire on Mahmud, whom he had praised so much and whose magnanimity he had compared to the Nile, thereby nullifying all the panegyrics he had lavished on him. Moreover, we must give Firdausi the credit of enough common sense to realize that by this satire he laid himself open to the charge of being dishonest and mercenary.

Here is Professor Browne's rendering of the Satire in his Literary History of Persia :

Long years this Shahnama I toiled to complete,
That the King might award me some compense meet.
But not save a heart writhing with grief and despair.
Did I get from those promises empty air.
Had the sire of the King some prince renown,
My forehead should surely been graced by a crown.
Were his mother a lady of high pedigree,
In silver and gold had I stood to knee.
But, being by birth not a prince but a boor,
The praise of the noble he could not endure.

The Shahnama abounds in descriptions of valour and chivalry. Firdausi had the unique gift of selecting the choicest words and expressions in narrating a particular scene. Below we give a sample of his masterpiece, a part which relates to courtship in ancient Aryana.

Zal was the son of Sam, a native of Seistan. He was born with white hair, which greatly disappointed his father, who set his heart against his son and ordered the babe to be taken to the mountain and abandoned there. Simurgh, the roc of fables, had its nest on this mountain. The bird, being attracted by the abandoned child, took it in its charge and fed and brought it up. In the meantime Sam had a dream in which he was told of his

white-haired son's growth and prowess. The very next day Sam started out for the hills where he found his son.

Zal, an attractive youth, endowed by nature with courage and a spirit of adventure, resolved to have an extensive tour. During his sojourn at Kabul, King Mehrab was very much impressed by his personality and entertained him with honour and pomp. In one of the entertainments one of the Mehrab's courtiers described to Zal the exquisite beauty of Princess Rudabeh, daughter of Mehrab, in these verses :

He hath a daughter in his house whose face
Is fairer than the sun ; like ivory her skin
From head to foot ; like spring in her complexion,
As a tree is she in stature. Two musky ringlets
Fall over her silver neck, the end of which
Would serve for ankle ring. Her cheeks are like
Pomegranate blossoms ; she has cherries for lips.
Her silver breast bears two pomegranate grains,
Her eyes are twin narcissi in a garden :
Their lashes——blackness rapt from raven's plumes.
Her brows are like two bows made at Taraz
Mantled with the purest musk. The moon would 'st thou have?
There is her face. The musk would'st thou seek ?
There is her hair. From head to foot
She is a paradise——All music, charm and beauty.

This panegyric raised a fire of emotion in Zal's breast. Rudabeh, on her part, also became interested in the new-comer. One day she confided the secret of her love to her maids, who were shocked at the idea, and assured her that her father's consent to her marriage with a white-haired old man could never be obtained. To dissuade her they pleaded with her thus :

Hath modesty departed from thine eyes,
That thou shouldst long to clasp upon thy bosom
One whose own father hath rejected him?
Monstrous is a white-haired child,



*H. E. Professor Khalilullah Khalili*
*Press Advisor to His Majesty the King*

*Professor Khalili is one of the greatest and most popular Persian poets of modern age, and holds a unique position in the literature of the country. He is not only a poet of a very high rank, but a fine prose writer as well. His style of writing is simple, direct, lucid and majestic. His recent book "The Ghaznavid Period" is a standard work on Afghan history.*

*Khalili is endowed with a fine sense of humour. It is a pleasure to be in his company and listen to his remarks which are often supported by quotations from the writings and poems of well-known Persian writers. He himself has a great command over that language and often composes verses extemporaneously.*

*Khalili's verses have gained immense popularity both in Afghanistan and Iran. Though his hands are full with official duties, yet he often finds time to come to the Faculty of Letters to teach history of Persian literature. His method of teaching and especially the way he recites poems is extremely fascinating and instructive. Everyone is spell-bound when the Professor speaks and expounds the philosophy of some Sufi poet.*

And offspring from such a one is not seemly.
Thy figure and face are such that the very sun
Would come from the four heavens to become thy spouse.

Rudabeh, thereupon, became very angry and declared passionately that Zal meant more to her than did the mighty kings on the earth. The maids, touched by her earnestness and her grief sought all possible means by which to aid her. So it came to pass that on a certain night Zal came to the foot of Rudabeh's bower, that perched high up on the towering walled castle. Presently Rudabeh appeared above like some enchanting fairy, and breathed his name softly. But the lofty parapet where she stood prevented Zal from seeing her face. He, therefore, begged to be allowed one glimpse of the fairest face on the earth ; so she loosened her long black hair and bade him use her tresses as a rope for ascending the castle. Firdausi describes this scene thus :

She of the fairy face heard the warrior's words
And doffed her scarlet wimple.
Then from her head, as from some tree-top, she loosed
A lasso, matchless braid of musk :
Coil within coil it was and snake on snake
Strand upon strand it lay upon her neck.
She loosened her tresses over the battlements
And when they straightened out they reached the ground.
Then spake Rudabeh from the wall above,
"O Paladin, O child of the warrior race,
Now speed thee quickly and gird thy loins,
Exert thy lion breast and royal hands,
I have cherished these tresses,
With which to help my beloved.

Zal shrank from using the scented hair as a ladder. Bestowing kisses upon her beautiful locks he released them. Then procuring a lasso from his page, he flung it aloft and climbed hastily to the bower of bliss and passed the night in his beloved's arms. This is Firdausi's rendering of the meeting :

One of the fairy face advanced to welcome him, she clasped
his hand,

And both intoxicated with love descended,
Hand clasped in hand, to her pavilion;
Gold-arabesqued it was, a meeting-place for kings,
A paradise adorned, a blaze of light, and
Slave girls attended the Howri there,
While Zal in rapt attention beheld
Her face, her hair, her loveliness and grace.
Zal sat in royal grace by that fair moon,
His dagger in his belt, and on his head
A ruby coronet. Rudabeh looked
With stolen glances at him still,
Looked at form, that grace, that height:
The more she gazed the more her heart inflamed.
They kissed and clung intoxicated with love,
But the lion did not molest the Doe.
So fared they till the day began to break
And drum-call sounded. Zal parted from his love,
Embracing her as warp and woof embrace.
Both wept and adjured the rising Sun,
"Oh Glory of the world, one moment more,
Thou needst not rise so hastily.

Having a high opinion of Zal, the Queen was greatly distressed by the fear of her husband's anger when she heard the news. She, therefore, with a trembling voice broke the news to him. The King was beside himself with rage and drawing his sword, threatened to kill his daughter. Firdausi puts the incident in these words:

Thereat Mehrab sprang up and seized his sword by the hilt,
His cheeks grew livid and his body shook:
With rage his heart was full, he groaned and cried:
"I should have cut her head off at her birth,
She has wrought on me this evil."

The Queen, however, assured him that Zal was of noble birth and noted for his valour and chivalry. She succeeded in reducing her husband to a calmer frame of mind, and ultimately

prevailed upon the King to give his consent to the proposed union of the two lovers. The wedding was celebrated with pomp and festivities lasting a week. Rudabeh later on became the mother of Rustam, the legendary hero of ancient Aryana.

Firdausi has often been criticized for his repetition of similes and epithets, leading to monotony. But in a huge poem like the Shahnama it is inevitable, partly because the particular traits are common and secondly because the poet unconsciously develops a fondness for and familiarity with a few expressions, which he frequently employs for bringing out the desired effect. In spite of these drawbacks, the author of the Shahnama rose to heights seldom approached by any other poet, and this speaks volumes for his intellect, devotion, imagination and above all for his eloquent, lucid and simple style.*

**Avicenna.**

Abu Ali Hussain bin Abdullah ibn Sina, the world-famous philosopher and physician, who is known in Europe by the name of Avicenna, flourished in the Ghaznavid period. His father, Abdullah, was a prosperous native of Balkh. At the invitation of Amir Nuh bin Mansur, the Samanid King of Bukhara, Abdullah left his motherland and became the Collector of Revenue for the town of Kharmatiyan. Near the city there was a village called Afshana, where Avicenna's father married a lady named Sitara. It was in this village that Avicenna was born in the year 980 A. D.

When Avicenna was only five years old, his father went to Bukhara, where he placed his son under a tutor who taught him the Kuran and literature. When Abu Ali reached his tenth year, he was reputed to have memorized the entire Kuran, and to have obtained a certain degree of information in dogmatic theology, the Indian calculus and algebra. Later on he met Hakim Abu Abdullah an-Natili al Bhkharaai from whom he learned logic, euclid, and almagest. The boy then approached Ismail az-Zahid, and studied theology and mysticism under his guidance. Later on he applied himself to natural philosophy,

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* The Ahang, Delhi; Vol. I, pp. 16-20.

divinity and other sciences, including medicine, which he studied under the Christian physician, Isa ibn Yahya. At the age of seventeen his fame as a physician was such that he was summoned to attend the Samanid Prince Nuh bin Mansur, who, after benefiting from his treatment, took him in his favour, and permitted him to make use of his valuable library, which, according to Avicenna's own account, contained many rare books "the very titles of which were not known to most persons." He greatly profited by them, but unfortunately, shortly afterwards the precious library somehow caught fire and all the books were totally destroyed. Avicenna's enemies accused him of having purposely set fire to it so that he might be the sole repository of the knowledge he had gained from those rare books. Others are of the opinion that the enemies of Abu Ali perpetrated the deed to deprive him of those useful source of knowledge.

The death of his father, and subsequently the collapse of the Sammanid power, about the end of the tenth century A. D., caused Abu Ali to leave Bukhara for Khwarizm, where he was warmly received by the ruling Prince, Ali bin Mamoon. His Vazier, Abul Hassan Suhayli, was a great patron of learning and helped scholars by granting them allowances and otherwise supplying their needs. Avicenna, due to the encouragement of this man, wrote some of his books at Gurganj, the capital of Khwarizm. After Sultan Mahmud took Khwarizm, he invited Avicenna to his court, along with other scholars. Abu Ali, declining the offer, and in company of Abu Sahal (a Christian) came out of Gurganj, and visited such places as Nisa, Abiward, Tus, Samangan, Shaqan and Jajiram, until at last he reached Gurgan, where he was warmly received by Shamsul Maali Qabus, who, however, was soon imprisoned in a fortress where he died.

After this Abu Ali travelled to Dahistan, where he was taken seriously ill. From there he returned to Gurgan, where he was received by Abu Obaid Gurgani, who was so much impressed by his vast knowledge that he used to visit him every day. Here he

completed some of his works. Then Abu Ali left for Ray ; and, after a stay of one year, he visited Qazvin and Hamadan. His stay lingered in the last-named city for nine years. The ruler, Shamsul-Daula Abu Tahir made him his minister. After the death of his patron, when Tahir's son came to power, Avicenna was again offered the previous post. But he politely declined the offer, and spent his time in writing books. Soon afterwords he was involved in a case of intrigue against the ruler and was imprisoned for four years. After the term of imprisonment was over, he left for Isphahan, where he was warmly received by the Buwayhid Prince, Alaud-Dawla ibn Kakuyah. Having undergone many vicissitudes of sickness, imprisonment and threatened death, this great philosopher and scientist ultimately died of an intestinal disorder in the summer of 1037 A. D. and was buried at Hamadan, where his grave is still to be seen.

Abu Ali is one of the greatest writers and thinkers of the Ghaznavid period. Throughout the Middle Ages he exercised a dominant influence in medicine and philosophy, not only over Asia, but over European thought as well. His extensive works comprise nearly a hundred scholarly theses deailng with a variety of subjects, theology, philosophy, astronomy, medicine, and other sciences. Of these his *Shafa* (the Book of Recovery) deserves special mention. It is a great philosophical encyclopaedia in 18 volumes, and with four main divisions—logic, physics, mathematics and metaphysics. It is interesting to note that this encyclopaedic work was almost unknown in the Orient, but had an enormous success among the Christian scholars after its translation into Latin by Gerhard of Cremona, Dominicus Gunisalimis and Hebrew Ibn Daoud. The Latin translation of this work was printed in numerous editions immediately after the invention of book-printing.

Abu Ali's other important works are : *Kitabul Majmu*, *Al-Hasil wal Mahsul*, *Al Qanun*, *Kitabun Nijat*, *Al-Isharat*, *Al-Awsat*, *Lisanul Arab*, *Al Mujaz*, and *Al Hikmatul* Qudsiyah. Of these the '*Qanun*' or "*Canon*" on medicine is the most celebrated. It consists of five books covering physiology, hygiene, therapy, and

materia medica, and it presents with admirable clarity a synthesis of the medical knowledge of that time. Some of Avicenna's contemporaries, out of jealousy, thought little of him and of his Qanun. Nevertheless the work remained the foremost medical treatise of European Universities for centuries, and was used as textbook as late as 1650 in the medical schools of Louvain and Montpellier.

**Unsuri the Poet-laureate**

Unsuri, whose full name is Abul Qasim bin Ahmad, was a native of Balkh. He was in the prime of his life when he was sent to Ghazni by Nasr bin Subaktagin, the brother of the Sultan. Mahmud was soon impressed by his vast knowledge and appointed him the poet-laureate of his court. He lived in a princely style, and is said to have four hundred liveried pages to wait upon him. His biographers say that besides being an eminent poet, he was a great philosopher and an erudite scholar. The four hundred poets who formed the famous "Round Table" of the Sultan looked upon him as their literary chief and master. All literary productions were recited to him before they were presented to the Sultan. His extemporaneous effusions were the delight of the whole court, and his odes and panegyrics were generally admired for their exquisite polish and soft voluptuous beauty. He is specially noted for his beautiful metaphors, and a pure vigorous diction. Unfortunately, out of his thirty thousand couplets only three thousand are extant.

Unsuri lived a long life and died in 1049, nineteen years afier the death of his benefactor—Sultan Mahmud.

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CHAPTER XVII

# SUCCESSORS OF SULTAN MAHMUD

The rule of the Ghaznavids in Afghanistan was not destined to last long. The Seljuks, a warlike Turkish race of Central Asia, and the Ghorids of Firoz Koh made Afghan life difficult. The deathblow came, however, at the hands of Alaud-din, king of the mountainous country of Ghor, who in 1151 A.D. set fire to the capital of the Ghaznavids and thereby earned the title of World Burner—*Jahansuz*. Ghazni had hardly recovered from this catastrophe, when the Mongolian barbarians appeared on the scene, headed by Gengiz Khan (1221 A.D). This led to the total destruction of the city ; its beautiful buildings, mosques, schools and libraries were burned to ashes. The city rose slowly from under the debris of ashes, but it could never again regain its previous glory and splendour.

When Sultan Mahmud died, his energetic son Masud was in Iraq, and the nobles of the court decided upon placing Mohammed, his brother, a man of gentle character, on the throne. Masud, upon hearing this, marched on Ghazni with the intention of ousting his brother. Mohammed went out to meet him, placing his army under the command of Ali Kurib. On reaching Takinabad and learning that Masud was approaching at the head of a formidable force, Ali Kurib decided to change sides. He seized Mohammed, blinded him, and put him into prison. Then with all the army at his command, he went towards Herat with the intention of winning Masud's favour. But contrary to his expectations, he was ordered to be imprisoned as a traitor along with his officers by Masud. The reign of Mohammed lasted only seven months.

Masud ascended the throne in 1031. He was so generous that he got the title of Ali II, while for his bravery and Herculean

strength he was called a Rustam. It is said that no one could wield his axe or mace and that even a horse could not carry his weight ; so he often rode an elephant. Even his father envied his strength and used to keep him away from the capital.

Masud, though brave and energetic, could not successfully fight the forces now arrayed against him on the various fronts. Several times he went to India to crush a revolt or to install a new governor. Twice he led his army to Tabaristan and Mazindaran. Towards the end of his reign, the Seljuks became very powerful and began creating trouble for him on the northwest of his frontier. Thrice he went against them and succeeded in scattering their forces in the neighbourhood of Merv and Sarakhs. But in the fourth and final conflict, at Taluqan, the Sultan was utterly defeated. Such was his panic, that on reaching Ghazni, he decided to collect his treasures and leave for India. But fortune did not favour him there either. At Marikala, his forces, who had an eye on the treasures, mutinied. The Sultan was made a prisoner and sent to the fort of Kiri, where he was shortly after put to death (1040). The insurgents, fearing severe retribution, decided to put the blinded Mohammed on the throne.

Maudud, son of Masud and his regent in Afghanistan, on learning of the tragic death of his father, ascended the throne at Ghazni. Then collecting a large force to avenge his father's death he left for India. Mohammed, who by now had assumed the royal title, was defeated and taken prisoner. He along with his children and partisans were killed in cold blood.

Maudud reigned nine years and died in 1049 at the age of thirty-nine. He was followed by Ali, son of Masud and Mohammed, son of Maudud, who were jointly raised to the throne. But after two months they were dethroned and imprisoned, and Abdur Rashid, son of Sultan Mahmud, was crowned king.

The new Sultan was a learned man and like his father was a patron of men of letters. But he was not strong enough to combat the various dangers that were threatening the Ghaznavid empire from all sides. The Seljuks, who were keenly watching the events, now made up their minds to swoop down upon Ghazni. Daoud, who

had by now established his authority in Khurasan, marched on Ghazni by way of Seistan and Bust, while he directed his son, Alp Arsalan, to advance *via* Tukharistan (modern Kataghan). Abdur Rashid, hurriedly collecting a large force, placed it under Tughril, one of the trusted and experienced generals of his father. Tughril, marching against Alp Arsalan, routed his army at a place called Khamar. Then, speedily turning towards Bust, he defeated Daoud and made him retreat hurriedly towards Seistan. Returning triumphantly to Ghazni, he caught hold of Abdur Rashid, who had come out to receive him, and put him to death. After killing all the male members of the royal family who then happened to be at Ghazni, he ascended the throne (1050). Abdur Rashid reigned two and a half years; he was only thirty at the time of his death. Tughril, the traitor, could not keep his position for more than forty days, but during this short time he perpetrated innumerable atrocities on the people of Ghazni. A conspiracy was, therefore, formed against him, headed by Nushtagin, which killed Tughril while he was sitting on the throne. Then, placing his head on a pole, they carried it through the streets of Ghazni.

Only two princes, Ibrahim and Farukhzad, who had taken refuge in a distant fort at Birghand, escaped this wholesale slaughter. Farukhzad was proclaimed king (1051). He reigned seven years, and was succeeded by his brother, Ibrahim.

Ibrahim, son of Masud, was a kind and just king, and, like his grandfather, was a great patron of scholars and artists. He was soon able to consolidate his position and to establish peace and order throughout the Ghaznavid dominions. The Seljuks were forced to come to terms with him. After the death of Daoud, Alp Arsalan, his son, also sued for peace and confirmed the treaty signed by his father. Sultan Ibrahim reigned happily for forty-two years and was succeeded by his son, Masud II in 1098 A. D.

Sultan Masud, entitled "The Generous", was indeed a virtuous prince. He abolished all the tyrannical practices and exhorbitant taxes introduced by his predecessors and did what he could for the welfare of his people. He died in 1115, after a reign of seventeen

years. He was married to Mahd-i-Iraq, the sister of Sultan Sanjar, the last great king of the Seljuks.

Malik Arsalan, son of Sultan Masud, who succeeded the throne, was famous for his magnanimity, courage and energy. But unfortunately he treated his stepmother, Mahd-i-Iraq, with contempt, which brought the wrath of Sanjar on him. Sanjar decided to aid Bahram, uncle of Malik Arsalan, to contest for power. As a result of this intervention, Arsalan lost the throne and was forced to take refuge in India, where he died in 1117 A. D.

Bahram Shah was manly, just and affiable, but he had to fight the surging waves of the Ghorids. In one of the battles his son, Daulat Shah, was killed. He himself was thrice defeated by Alaud-din, nicknamed *Jahansuz*. Ghazni fell into the hands of the invading force, who set it on fire. Bahram fled to India, but shortly after, when he heard that Alaud-din had departed, he returned to Ghazni, only to die shortly afterwards (1157). His reign lasted forty-one years.

After the death of Bahram, his son, Khusru Shah, ascended the throne. Being unable to oppose the rising power of the Ghuzz Turks, he left Ghazni and took shelter in India, making Lahore his capital. Meanwhile, Sultan Ghiass-ud-din Sam of Ghor, led a powerful army and was successful in driving the Ghuzz out of Ghazni. Thus that historical city and the capital of the Ghaznavids became a part of the Ghori Empire.

The last king of the Ghaznavids, Khusru Malik, son of Khusru Shah, ascended the throne at Lahore in 1160. Being a weakling, anarchy reigned everywhere within his dominions, and the reins of government gradually fell into the hands of ambitious generals and selfish nobles, while the Sultan himself indulged in luxury and pleasure. The end came at the hands of Sultan Muizzud-din Muhammed Sam, better known in Indian history by the name of Mohammed Ghori. He took Lahore in 1187, dethroned Khusru Malik and sent him as a prisoner to Firuz Koh, the capital of the great Sultan Ghiass-ud-din. By the order of the Sultan, Khusru Malik was kept a prisoner in the fort of Balrawan in

Gharjistan (modern Hazarajat), where he was put to death along with his son Bahram Shah, who was confined in the fort of Saifrud, in 1192. Thus ended the house of Nasirud-din Subaktagin.

**Sufi Poets of the Later Ghaznavid Period.**

*Khwaja Abdullah Ansari.*—Imam Abu Ismail Abdullah, better known by his title of "Pir-i-Herat" (Saint of Herat), is one of the greatest and most popular Sufi poets of his time. His father, Abu Mansur Mohammed, was also greatly esteemed for his piety and vast knowledge. He originally belonged to Balkh, but in 1005, leaving that city, he came to Herat and settled there. It was here that the Saint of Herat was born (May 4, 1006). Abu Mansur lived in Herat for some time with his wife and his only son, Abdullah. One day he suddenly changed his mind ; leaving his family, he returned to Balkh, where he stayed until his death in 1038 A. D.

The Saint of Herat, after the departure of his father, was forced to join the Milini school, where he continued his studies in divinity, literature and tradition for five years. It is said that the boy was often so absorbed in his studies, that he would forget to take his meals, and that his mother sitting close to him would put morsels in his mouth.

The Saint, after completing his studies at the age of twenty-six, made many journeys. He travelled far and wide and visited some of the important cities of Iran and Khurasan. Then, returning to his motherland, he took to writing, which has immortalized his name.

Pir-i-Herat holds an eminent position in Afghan literature. He was not only a poet of a very high rank and a philosopher of no mean ability, but a mystic, a teacher and a great humanitarian. His style of writing is simple, direct, lucid and majestic. He wrote both prose and verse, using Arabic and Persian as his vehicles of expression. His Arabic *Diwan* has more than 6,000 couplets, and his Persian verses reach to 14,000 in number, all devoted to Divine Love. In one of his Rubais (quatrains) he says :—

Love came and like blood entered my veins and skin,
It made me empty of myself and filled me with Friend.
All the parts of my body have been possessed by Him,
To me remains name only, otherwise He is all that I possess.

Pir-i-Herat is widely known for his *Manajat* (Invocations), which has been translated into English and several other European languages. The following is from this book :

I need no wine or cup ; I'm drunk with Thee ;
Thy quarry I, from other snares set free :
In Kaba and Pagoda Thee I seek,
Kaba and Pagoda, what are these to me.

His other works are : *Dil wa Jan, Kanzal Masakin* or *Ganj Nama, Kalandar Nama, Haft Hissar, Mohabat Nama, Maqulat wa Iradat, Zadul Arafain, Tabaqatul Sufia, Tabaqatul Mashaikh*, and a commentary of the Holy Kuran.

Pir-i-Herat died in 1088 at the advanced age of 82, and was buried in Gazargah, in the suburb of Herat. His resting place, even to this day, is held in great reverence by the Muslims all over the world. His "Invocations" has attained world-wide fame. Below we give an English translation of a portion of it by the late Sardar Jogindra Singh, one-time Minister of Education of British India :

O Lord, give me a heart
That I may pour it out in thanksgiving.
Give me life
That I may spend it in working for the salvation of the world.
My friend, make an effort
That thou mayest become a man ;
And gather treasures
Of feelings for others.
So that with the favours of the saints
And by the blessings of waiting upon them
Thy cheeks may grow pale

And love of the world grow
Cold in thy heart.
Fastings only means the saving of bread,
Formal prayer is only the business
Of old men and women,
Pilgrimage is the pleasure of the world.
Conquer the heart,
Its subjection is conquest indeed.

According to the Saint the law of life requires :

(1) Kindness to the young,
(2) Generosity to the poor,
(3) Good counsel to friends,
(4) Forbearance with enemies,
(5) Indifference to fools and
(6) Respect to the learned.

The ninth centenary of this great mystic poet was celebrated in Kabul September 1962, to which, in addition to the Afghan scholars from all over the country, some prominent Orientalists of East and West, were invited. The Afghan Prime Minister, Sardar Mohammed Daoud, after paying tribute to the memory of the Saint, said in his opening speech :

"The eminent status of the Sage of Herat, Khwaja Abdullah Ansari, is mainly due to his incessant efforts to serve the cause of humanity by his sound philosophy and learned discourses. His high moral character, humanitarian feelings, and specially his respect for human dignity and rights have won for him the admiration of high and low. It was his endeavour to bequeath to posterity his unswerving determination and his will to serve humanity. His faith in truth is unshakable and can rightly serve as a beacon for others."

*Hakim Sana'i.*—Abul Majd Majdud Sana'i is one of the greatest Sufi writers of the Ghaznavid period. He was a native of

Ghazni and flourished in the reign of three Ghaznavid Sultans, Sultan Ibrahim (1059-1099), his son Masud (1099-1115), and his grandson Bahram Shah (1117-1152).

The exact date of Sana'i's birth is not known ; he was born in the second half of the eleventh century and died between 1140-1150. In the beginning he was a panegyrist and held a prominent position at the Ghaznavid court. But an accident happened which changed the whole course of his life and caused him to devote his time exclusively to religious exercises, pious meditation and composition of sufistic poetry.

It is said that one day, while going to the court with one of his latest compositions in honour of the ruling Sultan, he heard a drunkard crying at the top of his voice from one of the taverns nearby : "Give me, O cupbearer, another cup, so that I may drink it to the blindness of the Sultan, who, neglecting his duty towords his subjects and not looking into their needs, is intent on going to India in this severe winter and deep snow, to win fresh laurels in the field of battle." Sana'i listened attentively. Then he heard him saying again : "O cupbearer, give me a second cup so that I may drink it to the blindness of Hakim Sana'i, who forgetting his duty towards his Creator, spends his time in useless pursuits and by writing panegyrics wants to please the Sultan and win worldly fame." This brought a great change in our poet, who returning to his house, promised that henceforth he would devote his time and direct his pen solely to the praise of the Almighty God and to the intellectual uplift of his fellow beings. Sana'i kept his promise until his death, and wrote most of his Sufistic poems during this period, for which he has attained a world-wide fame. His chief works are : *Hadiqatul Haqiqat*, *Tariq-i-Tahqiq*, *Kunzur Rumuz*, *Ishq Nama*, *Aqal Nama*, *Kar-Nama*, and a *Diwan* consisting of about eight thousand couplets. Sana'i is looked upon as one of three great Sufi poets of Persian literature. Maulana Jalal-ud-din Balkhi, one of the trio, held Sana'i in great respect and looked upon him as his teacher. He says in this respect :

Attar is the soul and Sana'i his two eyes
We have come after Sana'i and Attar.

Again in one of his odes, which he had devoted to Sana'i, he says :

Quoth someone, 'Master Sana'i is dead,
The death of such a master is no trifling thing;
He was not chaff which flew on wind,
He was not water that froze in winter;
He was not a comb which was broken with hair,
He was not the seed which the earth crushed.
He was a treasure of gold in this dust-pit,
For he valued the two worlds at a barley corn.
The earthly flame he flung to the earth,
Soul and intellect he bore to heaven :
The pure elixir mingled with the wine-drugs
Came to the jar's surface, and the dross settled apart.

Sana'i often tries to explain his subtle points by parables. The following illustration, which shows the impossibility of comprehending the whole of the Truth by one person, may serve as a favourable specimen :

Not far from Ghor once stood a city hall
Whose denizens were sightless one and all.
A certain Sultan once, when passing nigh,
Had pitched his camp upon the plain hard by,
Wherein, to prove his splendour, rank and state,
Was kept an elephant huge and great.
Then in the townsmen's mind arose desire,
To know the nature of this creature dire.
Blind delegates by blind electorate
Were therefore chosen to investigate.
The beast, and each, by feeling trunk or limb,
Strove to acquire an image clear of him.
Thus each conceived a visionary whole,
And to the phantom clung with heart and soul.*

Our saintly poet, who, after a rich and comfortable life at the court of Ghazni, turned to Truth, sings :

Make not this body and life thy abode ;

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*Translation by the late Professor E. G. Browne. Literary History of Persia, Vol. II, p. 319.

For long no man tarries here.
But walk upon the course of Eternity
And unveil the Bride of the Book,
Anchorite in the midnight prayer,
Leaving wiles of earth to wiles of men,
And fly to loftier realms of thought and life,
Of reality and unfolding light.

Again he says in the same strain :

Time is like the infant's nurse,
Placing all in a single cradle
With loving hands,
And nourishing all as
    Kindred all.
And so life's panorama flows on
    To eternity.
Men and women thus descending into oblivion
    May no longer grieve.
When and whither may go their sons
    With time.
For knowing and knowing well,
The fondling hand of Time
    Ever rocks the cradle.

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CHAPTER XVIII

# GHAZNAVID CIVILISATION IN THE LIGHT OF RECENT EXCAVATIONS

The Ghaznavid period was one of the glorious periods of Afghan history. Nearly all the kings of this dynasty were men of letters who patronized the learned. Ghazni in their time was a great centre of culture and art which boasted of lofty buildings, fine gardens and rich libraries, which were destroyed and burned to ashes first by Alauddin *Jahansuz*, and then in the beginning of the 13th century A. D. by Gengiz Khan and his wild hordes. Ghazni never recovered from these shocks and most of the city, testifying its past glory, lay buried under debris until quite recently. Thanks go to the Italian Archaeological Mission, which for the last five years has been busy excavating the site, where the great capital of Sultan Mahmud stood, and which by now has made some important discoveries, solving some of the intricate problems. Here is an extract of a report of the Mission, which appeared in the "East and West" magazine in 1959, throwing some light on the civilisation of the period :

"Under Mahmud and his successors a civilisation arose which, in origin, had no special character, but which developed to such an extent that it soon shone with a light of its own. It took as its model the Baghdad of the Abbasid Caliphs to whom the Ghaznavids paid great deference, recognizing their authority and right of investiture. For some time the Ghaznavid administration made use of Arabic, and writers ranking high in Arab literature lived in Ghazni.

"The Ghaznavids did not favour Iranism as did the Buyids, yet it was under the Ghaznavids, who spoke Persian and

liked to celebrate the pre-Islamic festivals of Sada and Mihrigan, that the Khurasani culture reached its highest development, especially in the field of letters. It was under Mahmud that the Book of Kings of Firdausi was written, and to him the immortal Epic was dedicated. At Ghazni also a group of Persian poets flourished, who created a literary style that lasted for centuries and spread over Central Asia, India and Turkey.

"When Mahmud took in hand the works which were to transform the appearance of the capital, Ghazni boasted of handicrafts of no great account of which we only know what can be learned from the Arab geographer of the tenth century, Al Muqaddasi . . . . . We can find in the sources available information on the building activities of Mahmud and his son Masud. The most notable edifice was perhaps a mosque. It was known as "Arusul Falak"—the Bride of Heaven. Even if we do not allow ourselves to be carried away by dazzling rhetoric, the expression used by al-Utbi gives an idea of its magnificence. The historian tells of the trunks of trees brought from India, of lofty arches, of colours that bring to mind those of a garden in spring time, of gilding, of a hall with an alabaster skirting and a *mihrab* (niche) of gold inlaid with lapislazuli, and with mouldings of the colours of violets and roses of a Maqsura, where no fewer than four thousand guards could be received. Unfortunately, this and other similar descriptions are too vague to give a sufficient idea of the Ghaznavid architecture. Besides, we lack information about the constructions of Masud I and of Bahram Shah.

"Of the splendid buildings that adorned the capital all that remains are two minarets, those respectively of Masud III and Bahram Shah (first half of the 12th century), which for decorative excellence count among the most famous specimens of Muslim architecture. It should be remembered that the second one was until recently

erroneously attributed to Sultan Mahmud. Mme. Sourdet-Thomine ascertained the truth, deciphering correctly the Kufi epigraph which runs on the monument . . . . Now it has been ascertained that the building which was supposed to be the older has nothing to do with Mahmud.

"Apart from Ghazni, a series of buildings have recently been discovered at Lashkari Bazaar, the most important of which is the residence of Sultan Mahmud, situated near the army quarters and preferred for long sojourns as it was admirably suited for hunting expeditions, of which the Ghazni sovereigns were very fond.

"The crafts followed by the Ghazni artisans developed a series of styles leading to truly remarkable results. Slabs inscribed with epitaphs occupy a place of prime importance in Muslim monumental calligraphy. Of much interest are the funeral monuments. All these features still call for study and the Italian Mission has already brought together much unedited material for this purpose.

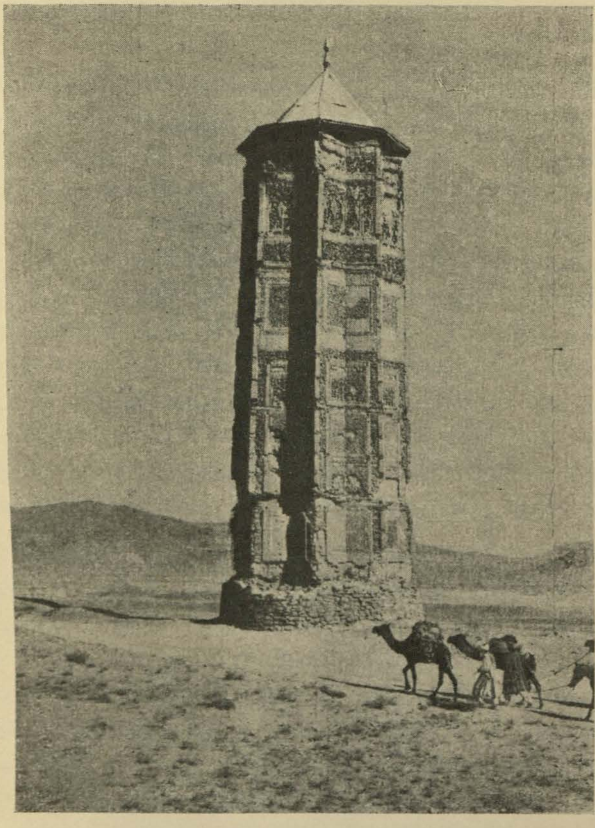
"Another interesting feature of the Ghaznavid art was the architectural ornamentations with marble basereliefs representing human figures . . . . . Works of much artistic value were produced by the Ghaznavid school of sculpture. The finest example is one recently brought to light at Ghazni, a screen of highly decorative effect.

"Besides the marble work, mention must be made of wood carvings. A very fine specimen has remained in the gate of the mausoleum of Mahmud, which the English removed to India and is now preserved in the Fort of Agra. The style is pure Islamic and reminds one of the works of the Fatimid art in Egypt.

"Ghazni, the glorious capital of Sultan Mahmud, the great champion of Islam, and the nativeland of men illustrious in letters, in science and in religious life, may

be called the holy city of Afghanistan. Its sanctuaries are visited by pilgrims, and are dispensers of heavenly blessings, and their marbles speak of a civilisation of great artistic nobility. Here were certainly the Bagh and Kakh-i-Firuzi (the Emerald Garden and the Turquoise Palace) of the Sultan, where, as we know, Mahmud wished to be buried. The terminals of the conduits with heads of lions and rams still stand there. At the other terminal, near the city, there is a mosque, which according to traditions, occupies the place where stood the "Bride of Heaven."

"The two minarets in the central section, of some 400 metres one from the other, seem to stand on guard over the vast city of dead, the only surviving remains of the great destruction. There can be no doubt that here stood the residence of the Sultans and court dignitaries, as can be gathered from the available sources, from oral traditions to toponymy."



*Of the splendid buildings that adorned Ghazni, the capital of the Ghaznavids, all that remains are two minarets, which for decorative excellence count among the best specimens of Muslim art.*

CHAPTER XIX

# THE GHORIDS

Ghor is a mountainous country lying east of Herat. It is the highest plateau in Afghanistan next to the Pamirs, having an extremely cold climate during the winter. At the time when Ghazni was enjoying bliss under the Ghaznavid Sultans, there in Ghor, in the heart of Afghanistan, an Afghan family—the Ghorids or Shansabiyans—was slowly rising to power and eminence. The history of this ruling dynasty forms one of the most interesting chapters of Afghan history. The two dynasties, the Ghorids and the Ghaznavids, in the beginning had cordial relations, but the growing power of the former alarmed the Ghaznavid Sultans, and this led to a series of wars and conflicts, which in the long run proved ruinous to the Ghaznavids. The successors of Mahmud were too feeble to maintain their position in face of the rising power of Ghor.

According to traditions the first among the Ghorids to make name and fame was Amir Fulad, son of Malik Shansab, hence the family is sometimes called Shansabiyans. Taking advantage of the anarchy then prevailing in Afghanistan Amir Fulad established an independent principality in this difficult part of the country at a time when Abu Muslim was making preparations to drive the Ommayeds out of Khurasan. Fulad is said to have led an army to the assistance of Abu Muslim and to have taken a prominent part in Abu Muslim's war of liberation.

After Amir Fulad's death, his son and then one of his brothers came to power one after the other. Then nothing is known of the family until the time of Amir Banji, son of Maharan, who was a great chief and is considered to be one of the powerful rulers of Ghor. He was a handsome youth of many fine

qualities. He is said to have gone to Baghdad and to have met Harunur Rashid, the Caliph, who giving him a banner invested him with a royal title.

Amir Subaktagin, on coming to power, led several expeditions into Ghor. When Sultan Mahmud ascended the throne, the kingdom of Ghor had fallen to the lot of Mohammed Suri, an energetic ruler, who had brought all the surrounding territories under his sway. This naturally caused the anxiety of the great Sultan, who made up his mind to nip this power in the bud.

Suri, relying on the strength of his forts, the prowess of his men and the power of his large army, jeeringly rejected the terms offered by the Sultan, and determined to fight to the bitter end. At last, after several engagements in which he showed unusual bravery, he was forced to take shelter in the fort of Ahangaran, where he made a heroic stand for a long period of time. But being cut off from all sides and receiving no help or provisions from any quarter, he was forced to surrender. The Sultan took him along with his son, Shish, to Ghazni with himself, but on the way Mohammed Suri died suddenly. It is said that he, who could not brook the disgrace of defeat and the humiliation of imprisonment, decided to end his life by taking poison which he had kept concealed under the signet of his ring. The Sultan immediately released his son Shish, and allowed him to return to Ghor. He gave the chieftainship of the principality to Amir Abu Ali, the eldest son of the deceased ruler, who promised to remain loyal to the Sultan. Amir Abu Ali was a devout Muslim who planted many Islamic institutions in Ghor and erected a large number of buildings of public utility. He is also credited with the erection of many Friday mosques and *madrassas* (schools) and with endowing them with Awqafs, tax-free lands. He held the religious leaders and Ulama in great respect and considered it as his duty to serve and venerate hermits and ascetics.

The relations between these two ruling families remained amicable until the end of the reigns of Malik Izzud-din Hussain of Ghor and Arsalan Shah bin Masud III of Ghazni. After the

death of the former, his seven sons did not remain united. One of the brothers, Qutub-ud-din, more energetic than others, established himself in the district of Warshad and called his capital the city of Firoz Koh. But his brothers, jealous of his power, would not allow him to live in peace. As a result of this growing animosity, the Prince was obliged to seek safety in flight. He came to Ghazni where he was cordially received.

Qutub-ud-din was an extremely handsome youth, full of charm and energy and a very fine disposition, which endeared him to all, high and low. Seeing his popularity with the masses, Bahram felt uneasy. The courtiers, too, out of jealousy and taking advantage of the whims of the Sultan, spoke ill of the youthful prince and made Bahram believe that he had an eye on his throne. Led astray by these machinations, the Sultan had the Prince secretly poisoned to death. The news brought forth tide of vengeance from the Ghori brothers.

The first to take action was Saif-ud-din. When the news of the foul murder reached him, he resolved to take full retribution. At the head of a large force he marched on Ghazni, where he routed Bahram's army and made him flee to India. Ascending the throne of Ghazni, he left Ghor to his brother, Baha-ud-din, father of Ghiass-ud-din and Muizz-ud-din, who a few years later were to play an important role in Afghan history. When winter approached, Saif-ud-din, placing full confidence in the people of Ghazni, sent the major part of his troops back to Ghor.

In the depth of winter, when all the passes leading to Ghor were blocked with heavy snow, the people of Ghazni wrote to Bahram explaining the situation and requesting him to return with all haste. Bahram, availing himself of the opportunity, returned to Ghazni. Saifud-din, with his Wazir, Sayid Majdud-din Musawi and a few loyal servants and officers, came out of Ghazni and left for Ghor, while a detachment of Bahram's army hotly pursued the fugitive monarch and his party. Overpowering him, they brought the king and his men in chains to Ghazni. Saifud-din and his Wazir were placed on camels, paraded ignominiously through the streets of Ghazni, while the people from the top of

their houses threw dust, dirt and ashes upon them. On reaching the bridge, the king and his Wazir were crucified.

Bahaud-din, one of the seven brothers, on hearing the news of this horrible deed, made up his mind to exact full retribution. At the head of a large force he left for Ghazni only to die on the way. Another brother, Alaud-din, had now to avenge the insult. He left for Ghazni leading a formidable army.

The Ghaznavid Sultan was proud of his war-elephants which he had brought with him from India. He sent a word to the invading force to go back to Ghor and to accept the status of their forefathers, otherwise they would have to repent their folly for he was coming with his *feels* (elephants) to chastize them. Alaud-din wrote back tauntingly telling that he was not afraid of feels as he had his own Kharmeels (two famous warriors, Sam Bani and Sam Hussain by name) to fight Sultan's feels.

Three engagements took place before the invading force could reach Ghazni. The third and the last battle was fought outside Ghazni, resulting in the utter defeat of the Sultan's forces. Bahram, fleeing from the battlefield, again took refuge in India. Alaud-din, entering Ghazni triumphantly, put it to flames. He himself took a seat on the top of an adjacent hill and watched the burning of the city and the wholesale massacre of its people, which lasted for seven days and nights. The beautiful Afghan capital, the resort of scholars, the centre of a very highly developed culture with its fine libraries, was converted to ashes, while Alaud-din himself was playing on the harp, reciting the following lines :

I am Ala-ud-din the ruler of the world,
I will conquer the whole world like Alexander,
I had intended to make rivers of blood flow,
But the children and old men beseech me to spare their lives.

This brutal action earned Ala-ud-din the title of *Jahansuz* (World Burner). Nothing was spared with the exception of a few tombs and the two minarets, which stand to this day.

Ghazni did rise once more after this catastrophe, only to be destroyed again by Gengiz Khan and his invading hordes in the early part of the 13th century A. D.

Ala-ud-din was succeeded by his son, Saif-ud-din, a prince of very gentle disposition, who released his cousins, Ghiass-ud-din and Muizz-ud-din, whom his father had imprisoned. Ghias dwelt peacefully at Firoz Koh in the service of Saif-ud-din, while Muizz went to Bamian and took up service with his uncle, Fakhr-ud-din Masud.

After Saif-ud-din, who met a tragic death at the hands of the Ghuzz, Ghiass-ud-din succeeded to the throne of Ghor. On getting the news of his brother's accession, Muizz-ud-din, leaving Bamian came to meet his brother at Firoz Koh. In 1173, Sultan Ghiass-ud-din drove the Ghuzz Turks out of Ghazni and appointed his younger brother, Muizz-ud-din, as ruler of Ghazni.

Muizz-ud-din Mohammed, better known in Indian history by the name of Mohammad Ghori, was a mighty warrior, a very able administrator and the builder of a vast empire. So long as his elder brother lived, he considered himself as his subordinate and made conquests in his name. He took Gardez in 1174, and the next year leading his forces against Multan, delivered the place from the hands of the Karmatians. In 1179, he took Peshawar, and two years later he advanced upon Lahore. The power of the Ghaznavids even in India was now drawing to its close. Khusru Malik, the last of the Ghaznavid Sultans, sent his son as a hostage and an elephant as a present to the Ghori Prince.

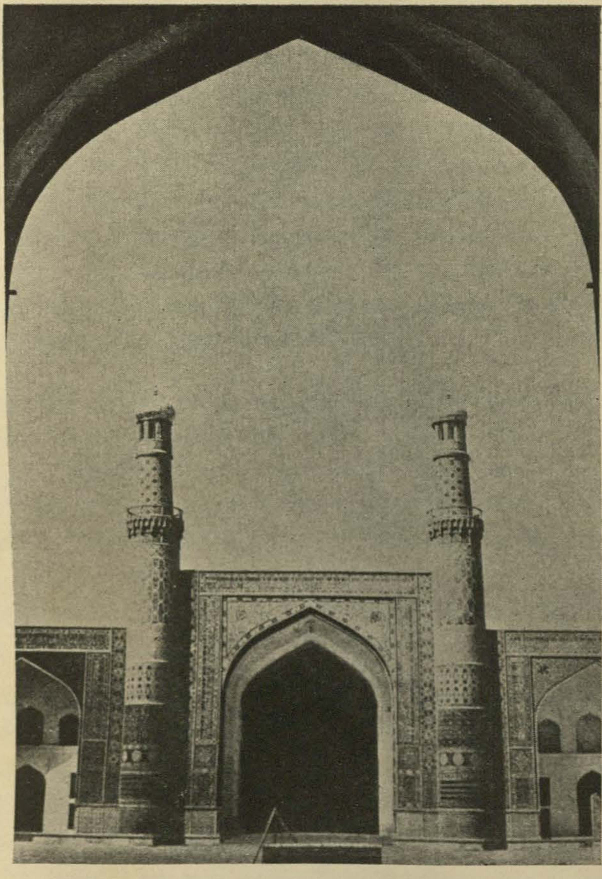
Shortly afterwards, when Mohammed Ghori left India, Khusru, forgetting his pledge, laid seige to Sialkot with the help of the Gakkars. This brought the Ghori Sultan a second time to Lahore. Khusru Malik could offer no effective resistance and was forced to surrender. Khusru, along with his son, Bahram, was sent to Firoz Koh, where both of them were killed in 1192, when war broke out between Khwarizm Shah and the ruler of

Ghor. Thus ended the great house of the Ghaznavids.

Sultan Ghiass-ud-din, who ruled for nearly forty years, was the greatest and most powerful ruler of the Ghori dynasty. He was a great builder ; and being religious, he took great pains in erecting mosques. The great and beautiful Friday mosque of Herat, which stands to this day, is a reminiscence of this period. During the reign of this Sultan, the Ghori power reached its zenith. Ghiass-ud-din had two capitals, one for winter at Dawar, the other for his summer residence at Firoz Koh.

After his death in 1202, Mohammed Ghori divided the ancestral lands between the heirs of his deceased brother, the chief of whom were Nasir-ud-din (son of Ghias) and Zia-ud-din (Ghias' son-in-law), keeping his own lands with Ghazni as his capital. Nasirud-din, who, neither then nor afterwards, showed any enterprise, quietly accommodated himself to the decision of his uncle.

Mohammed Ghori, within the space of twelve years, took the whole of Northern India as far as Bengal and Assam. Though the resources of the Ghori Empire were great and magnificent, and its military power, judging by the standard of the age, was quite efficient, yet it was not destined to last long. Various causes led to its downfall, chief among these being the rapid expansion of the Empire in India, which kept the Ghorids too busy to attend to serious dangers that were threatening them from the north and northwest. In 1205 Mohammed Ghori was forced to march north towards Khwarizm, because Alaud-din Mohammed Khwarizm Shah, taking advantage of Mohammed Ghori's long absence in India, was thinking to stab him in the back by taking Ghor. Mohammed Ghori advancing north besieged Merv, but failed to capture it because the non-Muslim Krakhatais of Turkestan decided to support Alaud-din. This made the position of the Ghori Sultan all the more untenable. In the battle near Merv, Ghori was utterly defeated and he had to fall back on his capital in utter consternation. But he was not



*The great and beautiful mosque of Herat, built in the 12th century A. D., and restored recently, has 460 domes, 1300 arches and 444 pillars.*

destined to reach Ghazni as he had planned. At Andkhui, he was surrounded on all sides and his retreat to Ghazni was totally cut off. At this critical juncture, he was deserted by most of his officers, which forced him to pay a large sum of money as ransom, and to retreat hurriedly towards Ghazni. This incident practically sealed the fate of the Ghori Empire.

Mohammed Ghori left for India with a view to collect a second army and to lead it against his formidable foe in Central Asia. But fortune did not help him to execute this plan. On his way back to his motherland in March 1206, he was assassinated in his tent on the bank of the Indus, probably by the Karamatians. His coffin was taken to Ghazni and interred at Dehak, not far from the capital. Thus passed away one of the greatest conquerors and rulers, who may rightly be called the founder of the Muslim Empire in India.

Mohammed Ghori had no son and his only daughter had died before him. Nasirud-din, King of Ghor, in return for presents, gave letters of manumission to the three great slave officers of his uncle, Qutubud-din Aibak, Nasirud-din Qabacha, and Tajud-din Yulduz, confining his rule to the hereditary lands of Ghor. These slave officers, now legally free, assumed the titles of independent rulers by striking coins and having Khutba recited in their names.

The Ghori power in Afghanistan declined rapidly after the death of Mohammed Ghori. In 1215, Jalalud-din Munkabarni, one of the sons of Alaud-din Khwarizmshah, drove out Taj-ud-din Yuldiz from Ghazni and took possession of historic Balkh, Bamian and Kabul as well.

In his Indian possessions, Mohammed Ghori was succeeded by his lieutenant, Qutubud-din Aibak, who shifted his capital from Lahore to Delhi and laid the foundation of the Mamluk Sultans (Slave Kings), which marks the beginning of a new era in Indian history. These Afghan Kings settled in India, ademit their home, and had an earnest desire to build up and construct a

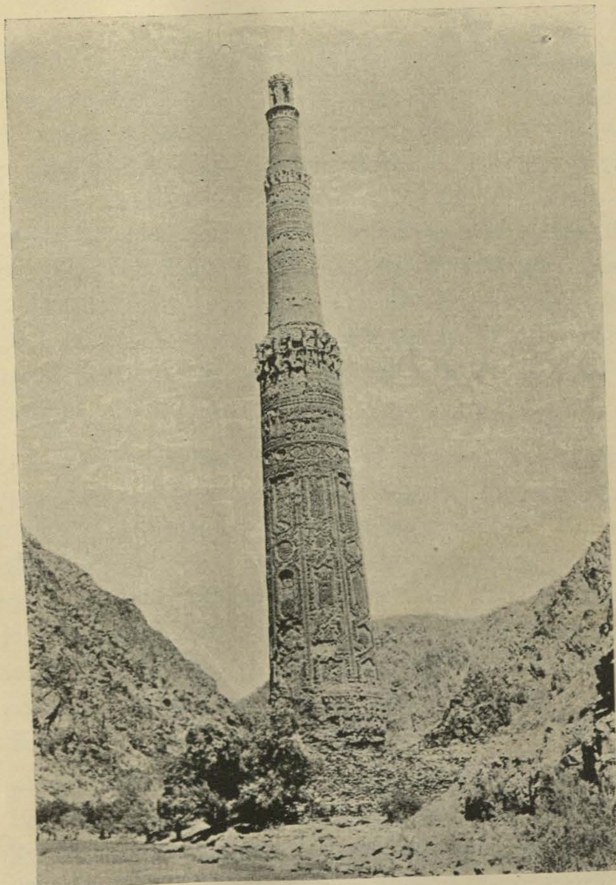
strong united India. The Afghan rule in India lasted, with an interval of some fifteen years, up to 1556 A. D.

**Retrospect.**

The history of Ghor and its people forms an important and interesting chapter of Afghan history. Who these people were and when they embraced Islam, are riddles of history yet to be solved. Some think they were the descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes who settled in Afghanistan long before the advent of Islam. One of their leaders, Qais, hearing about the Arabian Prophet, went to Mecca, embraced Islam and was given the name of Abdur Rashid. His services in the holy wars were greately appreciated by the Prophet. Another version has it that up to the days of Subaktagin (close of the 10th century A. D.) and even Sultan Mahmud, the Ghoris were pagans. What was their religion? Again no one can say definitely. Some think that they were Buddists, others regard them as Zoroastrians or even as Hindus. According to al-Utbi, Mohammed bin Suri, whom Mahmud of Ghazni defeated and deposed, was a Hindu. He further says that one of Suri's grandsons fled to India and took shelter in an idol-temple. But the paganism of Ghor seems to be indigenous, having no connection with the outside world. Zamindawar once possessed a famous temple dedicated to the god Zuz or Zur, whose fame had reached as far as China. This temple existed until the latter part of the 9th century.

When the Arabs came to Afghanistan, they could not conquer Ghor, and these fierce warriors kept their independence long after the Arab wave had subsided. Later, when Abu Muslim rose against the Ommayeds, the Ghoris under their leader, Fulad, hastened to his assistance and took a prominent part in the war of liberation.

It is said that when Subaktagin ascended the throne of Ghazni and clashed with these warlike tribes, they had not as yet professed Islam. For a time Ghor served as a buffer state between the Seljuks and the Ghaznavids. Then, taking advantage of the declining power of the latter, they laid their hands on



*Minar of Jam (the Jam Minaret) one of the most important edifices and is considered to be the greatest Islamic monument throughout Afghanistan. The builders of the Qutub Minar at Delhi were inspired by this architecture.*

Ghazni and most of the possessions of the Ghaznavid Empire as far as Lahore. Not content with this, they extended the boundaries of their kingdom as far as the Brahmaputra in the east.

The Ghorids, like the Ghaznavids before them, were great builders and patrons of art and learning. Some of them even composed verses. Unfortunately, the ravages of time and especially the invasion of Gengiz Khan at the head of the Mongol barbarians, destroyed most of their useful works. With the exception of two magnificent buildings, the great Friday Mosque of Herat and the Jam Minaret, discovered only recently, practically nothing has been left. The Mosque is a fine piece of art and has been repeatedly repaired and set in order, while the great minaret still stands in all its glory in the heart of Firoz Koh, the capital of the Ghori Kings.

The Ghori period had two kinds of architectural edifices. One of these pertained to the common design, the remnants of which are still to be seen scattered over the country. The second was the official architectural style, and the remnants of this are to be found in Herat, Chisht and Firoz Koh. The most elegant of these is the Minar-i-Jam (Jam's Minaret), which bears a very close resemblance to the Qutub Minar of Delhi. It so appears that the architects of the Qutub Minar were inspired by the Minar of Firoz Koh.

The place where this lofty minaret stands lies in the eastern part of the Herat province at a distance of some 40 kilometres north of Sharak and 65 kilometres northwest of Chisht. It lies close to the Hari Rud and its base is washed by its water. The height of the minaret is about 70 metres, and because of its position on the bank of the river, its foundation appears to be very deep and sound. The lower portion is octangonal in shape, each side being four metres in length. In the interior, the Minar has a staircase having 250 steps, leading right up to the top. The Minar throughout is built of burnt-bricks and the whole of its outer surface is covered with Kufi script, not yet wholly deciphered. The trellis-works, flowers, paintings and epitaphs,

all done in burnt-bricks, are the living testimony of artsmanship, efficiency and skill of the artists in those remote times. The Kufi epitaphs still require minute study. The most important part read so far is the name of the Illustrious Sultan-ul-Muzzam Ghiyasud-din Ghazi, which is engraved on the upper portion of the Minar.

Minar of Jam is undoubtedly a most important historical edifice and is considered to be the greatest Islamic monument throughout Afghanistan. Strange it is that only a few years before no one was even aware of its existence.

Firoz Koh, the capital of the Ghori Sultans, was also a seat of learning, and boasted of a large number of men of letters, artisans, philosophers, mystics and historians, most of whom, due to the collapse of the Ghori Empire and later on the invasion of Gengiz had to seek new homes. They migrated to India to add to the lustre of Mamluks' court.

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CHAPTER XX

# AFGHANS IN INDIA

The Arab invasion of India, ending in the conquest of Sindh, was merely a passing phase. Though the Arabs maintained a precarious hold over that part of the country for nearly three hundred years, yet this hardly affected the history or the culture of India. But what the mighty Abbasid Caliphs failed to achieve was accomplished by the Afghans.

The Afghan rule in India, commencing from the days of Sultan Mahmud (beginning of the 11th century), and lasting until the middle of the 16th, proved to be an event of great historical importance. It ended the isolation of India from the rest of the world, and ushered in a new era of commercial and cultural contacts with other countries. It brought about the unification of the sub-continent to an extent that had never been achieved in the previous periods. It gave India peace and tranquility, law and order and an efficient administration—civil, judicial and fiscal—hitherto unkown. It brought about an unprecedented degree of agricultural prosperity, industrial development and commercial advancement. But the greatest transformation was brought in the fields of culture and religion.

After the annexation of the Punjab by Sultan Mahmud, a free and uninterrupted intercourse was established between India and the Muslim countries in the north and northwest. Scholars, poets and historians moved to and fro, and many Muslim families from Afghanistan, Persia and Transoxiana came and settled down in various parts of the country, bringing with them their rich cultural traditions. The capital of the new province, Lahore which, after the fall of Ghazni, actually became the capital of the

kingdom, soon turned into an important seat of learning and culture, rivalling Ghazni itself.

After the final extinction of the Ghaznavids and the establishment of the Sultanate of Delhi, the new capital soon became a rendezvous of numerous poets, scholars and divines. Their immigration from the north swelled to gigantic proportions on account of the invasion of the Mongols under Gengiz Khan, and the havoc caused by them in the Muslim countries. The new arrivals were generously welcomed by Sultan Iltutmish, the second king of the Mamluk dynasty, who was fully conscious of the great addition to the splendour of his court by the presence of such a galaxy of literary monuments. We have a long list of the poets and scholars who adorned the court of Iltutmish and that of his rival, Nasirud-din Qabacha, ruler of Sindh. Among these, mention may be made of Minhajud-din, the auther of Tabaqat-i-Nasiri and Nizamud-din Hassan Nizami, who wrote the history of the reigns of Aibak and Iltutmish, called also Fakhr-i-Mudabbur. Qabacha's court could also boast of the famous scholar al-Aufi, the auther of the well-known work of biography, *Labab-al-Albab*. Another notable development was the formation for the first time of several *madrasas* run under state supervision. Iltutmish also built two state-sponsered colleges in Delhi known as the Muizziya and the Nasiriya.

Along with these conquerors came a goodly company of saintly men, who had dedicated their life to the cause of serving humanity irrespective of caste, creed or country. These truly noble and broad-minded saints mixed up with the common people, spoke their dialects and imparted their message of equality and brotherly love. Many of them were endowed with the gift of eloquent speech and even composed poetry, and their homely memorable verses, teaching the worship of one Supreme God and the dignity of man, went directly into the hearts of their listeners. Their simple teaching, stressing the love of God and of man, their denunciation of idolatary, the sanctity of priests and the hypocrisy of caste system, appealed to a wide circle among the masses, who had been living under the tyrannies of social inequities for generations. They destroyed the myth of aristocracy based on birth

and taught that every individual could reach the highest good of human life by his own efforts. Their sincerity, purity, dedication, and enthusiasm stirred the springs of life and moved men to high endeavour and selfless devotion.

The Afghans encouraged the study of Arabic and Persian in India, thus making it possible for the Indians to benefit from the vast store of knowledge which the Muslim world had now accumulated. The Indian languages were greatly enriched by the introduction of Arabic and Persian, which by now had attained great perfection. The Afghans brought with them the art of writing history, and they have left behind a large number of chronicles. A careful study of these shows that these "warrior-kings" were on the whole very liberal to the Hindus and tolerant of their culture.

The Afghans brought into Indian industries that were not known, specially the manufacture of paper, which they had learnt from China. In the manufacture of woollen cloth, too, the Afghans had a lot to contribute. Similarly, in the styles of art and architecture, music and painting, immense changes were brought about. A careful survey of the Afghan monuments in India clearly reveals their architectural excellence. Sir John Marshall and Percy Browne and other historians and critics held that the Afghan style of architecture in conception and execution, plan and ornamentations, was a valuable landmark in the evolution of the builders' art in India. In fact, it forms the transitory stage without which the culmination of the rich and florid, beautiful but ostentatious buildings of the Mughals would have been impossible. The famous French historian, Peve Luc, said some sixty years ago : "A comparative study of architectural designs has convinced me that the Sher Shah's tomb in the distant India is most simple, most interesting, most graceful and most perfect in architectural layout. There are tombs and monuments all over India, some even more beautiful and colourful than the tomb of Sher Shah, but in grace and simplicity of style, in excellence, supremacy and aesthetic appeal there is none to challenge the tomb of this great emperor and administrator." Below we give the

estimate of an eminent Indian professor* on the contribution of Afghan hegemony to medieval Indian history and culture :

"The Afghan hegemony in medieval India is a drama in five acts. The veil of the drama opens onto the conquest of Mohammed Ghori, and ends on the rule of Ibrahim Lodi. The prologue of the drama is played by Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni and the epilogue ends with the collapse of the Sur dynasty in the field of Panipat in 1556 with a little break of fifteen years, when the descendants of Timur, I mean Babar and Humayun ruled (from 1526 to 1540). Of course these two Chaghtais played their part in the drama of Indian history from Kabul and Kandahar, the two strategical points of Afghanistan.

"It is true that Sultan Mahmud during his rule in Afghanistan undertook seventeen campaigns against India and fought a number of battles with all the consequences which are generally cited in most of the history books and chronicles of the time and later centuries. But in spite of all these, the relations of Afghanistan and India of that time did not consist of war and counter offensive, invasion and destruction. There was another side of relations between the two countries, one more humanistic and durable.

"The conquest of Sultan Mahmud opened a new chapter in the relations of the two countries and gave birth to a new fusion of Indo-Afghan culture and civilisation, which is generally called the Muslim Culture of India. Mahmud of Ghazni was a great conqueror and anempire builder. He was a firm believer in the faith, but his real aims and objectives were the establishment of a big empire including, besides his kingdom, the Afghanistan of that time, India, Persia, Transoxiana and even the neighbouring

*Speech delivered by Professor M. L. Roy Chaudhri, Head of the Department of Islamic Culture, Calcutta University, in the hall of the Law College, Kabul University, during his visit to Afghanistan in 1959.

countries. He wanted to create a confederation according to his own conception and a fusion of all these countries around the throne of Ghazni.

"It was Sultan Mahmud who used a bilingual coin—Hindi character with Arabic Kalima. This bilingual coin in sacred Arabic and idolatrous Sanskrit was of supreme significance in creating a friendly atmosphere for future Muslim rule in India. If Arabs conquered a land, they at once started Arabicizing the conquered people and country by abolishing the local language and replacing it with the Arab language and script. But Sultan Mahmud kept the languages of the heathens by giving it a place side by side with sacred Arabic. The greatest gift of Sultan Mahmud was Al-Beruni, about whom I shall have to speak in detail later.

"It was Shahabud-din Mohammed Ghori, a child of the Afghan highland of Ghor, who supplanted the Ghaznavid empire and occupied Lahore as a part of the Ghaznavid legacy. Historically speaking, Ghori is credited with the permanent conquest of India, and he ruled his Indian possessions through his own chosen men, the slaves no doubt. The concept and term of slaves should not be understood in the English sense of the term. In the Afghan sense slavery is a status and not a profession. A prince of yesterday, after he is beaten in battle, is a slave of today ; if he has ability, he is a son-in-law tomorrow and a successor the day after. In fact, Mohammed Ghori accepted in principle and practice the fundamental theory of the dignity of man. Hence he appointed Qutub-ud-din Aibak as his representative in India.

"It was Qutub-ud-din Aibak who made Delhi a permanent seat of government in India. This is an important fact that instead of building a new life, he chose to continue the old without breaking the tradition. The Afghans often allowed the old to continue and added new to the old. Qutub-ud-din brought the tradition of generosity into

his administration and was called Lak-Bukhsh. He introduced the game of polo into India. He was succeeded by Iltutmish, who was a slave too. Iltutmish's contribution to Indian history is much more than he is often credited with. It was he who saved India by refusing asylum to Jalauddin Khwarizmshah, who was flying from the wrath of Gengiz Khan. The foresighted, farsighted Iltutmish had the real wisdom to make an assessment of his strength. It was Iltutmish's tact which persuaded Gengiz to retrace his steps from the border of India. India was relieved and saved. Had he come to India, it would have been a rehearsal of the tragedy of Baghdad at the hands of Hulaku Khan a generation later. India owes a deep debt of gratitude to Iltutmish for saving her from the Mongol locusts.

"To fight the Mongol menace Iltutmish erected a large number of forts along the frontier of northwest India and settled land with tribes, giving them autonomy in agriculture, taxes, and day-to-day life. He did not attempt the impossible; he did not try to extend his territories, and was content with what he had. His wisdom and toleration must be commended.

"Politically speaking, Balban was one of the best Afghan kings to rule India. His contributions are very many. He had served six rulers, created five of them, besides keeping the frontiers of India safe. He created political tradition ; it was he who brought originality to the institution of royalty in Medieval India. He made royalty an art and an institution. His political philosophy has been well preserved in his advice to his son as has been recorded by Zia-ud-Din Barani in his Tarikh-i-Firozshahi.

" Khalji Afghans were from a village called Khalj in Kandahar province. Alauddin Khalji carried the Muslim flag to the southern accesses of the Vindhya Range and built the first all-India empire and gave a real unity to India.

Six times he drove the Mongols from the frontiers of India and did not scruple to kill two thousand of them in one day when they proved a menace to his empire. To him the State was the first choice. To religion he said, "Not that I love you less, but I love my State more." His conversation with Mulla Moizzuddin is very important when he said, "I shall do what is good for the State." This idea of separation of State from religion in the 13th century points out a departure in political statecraft.

"Alauddin Khalji's boldest experiment was his price-control system. To get supplies for his army, he fixed the price of every article ; he also controlled exports and imports—a policy which was followed by the most advanced states of the world some seven hundred years later.

"The Tughluqs, who succeeded the Khaljis, created many interesting precedents in Indian politics. Nominating Feroze Tughluq, son of a Hindu lady, Nila Devi of Depalpur in the Punjab, he recognized merit as a criterion of kingship ; he further proved that birth from a non-Muslim mother was no bar to succession. His great contribution was that he brought logic into politics, but unfortunately he was far in advance of his time. He was the first Indian king to experiment on a system of base metal currency.

"Feroze Tughluq was a great builder. He dug four canals, constructed roads and laid out 12,000 gardens. He proved that even the son of a Hindu mother could be a pious Muslim and could act as a good Muslim in defence of his religion. He also translated the famous books of Indian medicine into Persian.

"Unfortunately, during the reign of his third successor, Mohammed Shah Tughluq, Timur devasted the Delhi empire, a blow from which the Afghans never recovered either in homeland or in the land of their adoptation. Then came the turn of the Sayyid Afghans, who were followed by the Lodis.

"In politics Bahlol Lodi was a demonstration of the tribal spirit of the Afghans ; the spirit of equality and tribalism. Bahlol was a merchant in his early life, though born of a fighting clan. Of course every Afghan is a soldier by instinct. In order to re-establish Afghan supremacy, he invited his tribal brethren from Afghanistan and placed them in positions of honour and dignity. It was in his time that the tribes of Furmoly, Farankhudi, Mohmandi, Lohani, Nohani etc., came and settled in Hindustan. He was so conscious of the sense of equality that he would never sit on the throne in front of them. In fact, he constructed a throne which could accommodate forty Afghan nobles together. He never addressed his Afghan nobles by name, but would add the title—*Masnad-i-Aala*. If a noble would feel his honour touched or his dignity wounded, Bahlol would go to his house, beg his pardon, and would not leave until the had made amends with him.

"Sikandar Lodi, his son, was of a harder stuff than his father. His whole life was a continuous struggle for the safety of the Delhi empire. He did not attempt to extend his empire out of practical sense, but continued to rule his kingdom as he had inherited it. It was Sikandar who introduced the system of keeping accounts in two languages, Hindi and Persian. He is the first to build a fleet to take pilgrims to Mecca.

"Unfortunately, the Lodi rule was brought to an end by a descendant of Timur, who had shattered the Tughluq empire a century and a quarter before. It was due to tribal dissensions as well as to lack of ability on the part of the last ruler of this line, Ibrahim Lodi, who failed to get the co-operation of his Afghan tribes on account of his harsh behaviour which wounded the prestige of the Afghans, that the Lodis lost ground. Not that all the Afghans liked the foreigner Babar, but they disliked Ibrahim. Babar won the battle of Panipat, but failed to destroy the Afghan spirit of independence.

"The epilogue of the drama is no less interesting ; it was the revival of Afghan rule under Sher Shah Suri, a true and patriotic Afghan. Sher Shah was the last flicker in the lamp of Afghan hegemony. A candle burns highest before it dies. All that was great in the Afghans was symbolized in Sher Shah. Gallant, stout, clever, capable, Sher Shah turned a new leaf in the political history of India. His was a new philosophy in Indian politics. He invited all the Afghan tribes together. No distinction was made between Batanhi, Sherwani or Lohani. He made friends with the Hindus too, whom he treated as Indians against the Chaghtais under Humayun. After he had driven out Humayun from India, he treated Hindu and Muslim peasants on equal terms. Hindus were freely recruited into the Muslim army. Sarais were built for the Hindus as well as the Muslims according to their religious sentiments. He believed in the theory that subjects are subjects and no distinction is to be made in matters of justice. Long roads were constructed, canals were dug and palaces were built. Though a devout Muslim he like Alauddin Khalji, did not allow the Mullas to have the power of dictation in matters of State. He organized a large army, established postal services and an efficient communications system. In fact, he was the forerunner of Akbar, the greatest national ruler of India after Asoka. Akbar was but a larger edition of Sher Shah Afghan. Had Sher Shah been spared a few more years, the Mughals might not have played a part in Indian history. Unfortunately, within ten years after the death of Sher Shah, Afghan rule was destroyed by Humayun and Akbar, but that too from Afghanistan. Humayun's great general, Bairam Khan, who conquered Panipat, was a Badakhshani Afghan.

"The cultural contribution of the Afghans to medieval India deserves more and better consideration than it has received so far. The greatness of the Mughals has

dramatically blinded the historians, who are generally fascinated by the length of the rule of a dynasty, by the succession of great rulers, and by the art and architecture of the great Mughals. The historians generally lose sight of the fact that it was a child of Afghnistan, Sultan Mahmud, who broke the forces of resistance of the Hindus, and it was he who opened the line of communication between India and the Muslim world. It was the Afghan colony in Lahore which kept the line open for centuries.

"India owes much to the great savant Al-Beruni, the court-astrologer, philosopher, astronomer and mathematician, that living encyclopaedia of the 11th century, for his preserving of lost Indian sciences and forgotten philosophy. Al-Beruni was, undoubtedly, the most learned man of his time. So vast was his knowledge, so varied his interests and so competent his approach that one wonders to think what that one small human head could carry. Had he been born in Europe, the Europeans would have honoured him as a prodigy and would have almost deified him. India owes to him and to his race a great debt.

"The Persian language which the Afghan rulers introduced into India was an Afghan product. Jamalud-din Rumi, whose mysticism has so much influenced the mystics throughout the world, was an Afghan from Balkh, which is a part of Afghanistan.

"The Afghans did not attempt like the Arabs to make the wholesale conversion of the conquered people, because the Holy Kuran permitted the existence of the conquered people on payment of Jazya. They did not impose on the Hindus the language of the Kuran, which the Arabs tried to do. In fact, the Afghans made a compromise in the matter of language. Urdu was the product of this compromise—alphabet Arabic, words Persian, Turkish and Indian, but grammar purely Indian. To the

Afghans we owe our provincial languages, such as Bengali, Marahti and partly Hindi.

"And finally, the Afghans did a great service to the history of the country. They attached to their courts historians, Waqa-i-Nawis, who wrote history. Historiography, as an art, was the Afghan gift to India."

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CHAPTER XXI

# THE MONGOL INVASION AND ITS EFFECT ON AFGHAN CULTURE

After the break-up of the Ghori dynasty in the beginning of the 13th century, shortly after the death of Muizzuddin Mohammed, the Ghori possessions in India passed into the hands of Qutubud-din Aibak, who laid the foundation of the Slave Dynasty in India, while Afghanistan itself was occupied by Sultan Alaud-din Mohammed Khwarizmshah, an incapable ruler who was merely a tool in the hands of his cruel and ambitious mother, Turkan Khatun. The Khwarizmshahi dynasty was at this time at the zenith of its power, comprising all the countries from the confines of Chinese Turkestan in the east to the borders of Iraq in the west and the Indus in the southeast. Not content with this vast empire, Mohammed Khwarizmshah planned to overthrow the Abbaside Caliphate and make himself the spiritual ruler of the Islamic world as well. With this in view he collected a large force and early in 1218 set out on his expedition towards Baghdad. He had hardly reached his destination, when the news was brought to him that the Mongolian hordes under their great leader, Genghiz Khan, had invaded the eastern part of his empire.

This incident, which soon changed the face of the world and set in motion forces that still have not lost their effect, and have caused untold miseries and sufferings for the human race, could have been, at least for some years, averted, had Alaud-din Mohammed Khwarizmshah been farsighted. But by his foolish acts, greed and treachery, and especially by his murdering of some Mongol merchants and an envoy of Genghiz Khan himself, he incurred the wrath of the "Scourge of God" and gave him the best possible excuse to invade his dominions. Alaud-din, on receiving the news,

hurriedly returned to stem the surging waves of the barbarians. Being a coward by nature, he could offer no effective resistance, and fled from place to place hotly pursued by the Mongols. His indecision and cowardice at this critical juncture greatly facilitated the advance of the invaders, who, entering the Central Asian countries, carried fire and sword with them. The flourishing cities, the centres of art and learning, that came in their path were literally razed to the ground or burnt to ashes. Wherever resistance was encountered or whenever a Mongol prince lost his life in battle, they spared neither old nor young, learned or illiterate, men or women. They stabled their horses in mosques, burned libraries and used rare manuscripts as fuel. Millions and millions of people, some of them scholars of great eminence, were killed in cold blood. The irresistable Mongols were bloodthirsty heathens, having respect for nothing, but slew, destroyed and burned without mercy or compunction.

Mohammad Khwarizm Shah, who had no less than 400,000 horse at his command, was not equal to the occasion. Shunning a clash with the marauding hordes, he fell back hastily towards the interior of his country in order to save his life. He did not call a halt until he reached a small and deserted island in the Caspian Sea, called Ab-i-Skoon. There he decided to stay and watch the course of events, but he did not live long enough to watch the devastation of his extensive empire with his own eyes, and died shortly after of a broken heart.

It was now for his brave and energetic son, Jalalud-din Munkabarni, to take up the gauntlet and carry on the war of liberation, and thus to some extent save the memory of the once mighty empire of Khwarizm from ignominy. The gallant Prince made Ghazni, in the heart of Afghanistan, his military headquarters. Rallying the tough Afghan highlanders around his banner, he inflicted a crushing defeat on the Mongols led by one of their famous generals, Kutikonian, at Parwandarah, not far from Kabul. Genghiz Khan, who was then at Herat, could not brook this defeat. Marching at the head of a large force, he first laid siege to Bamian, a place of great strategical importance, lying deep in the heart of the lofty Hindu Kush and controlling the route from Balkh to

Kabul. The siege dragged on for some time, and in one of the engagements Mutugen, Genghiz Khan's grandson, was killed. This so infuriated the ruthless monarch that when he got the upper hand and succeeded in entering the citadel, he ordered that no living being, man or animal, was to be spared. The beautiful city of Bamian was literally wiped off the face of that fascinating valley, and was renamed, Mao-Baligh—a ruined city. Even to this day Bamian is a heap of dust and its citadel is called the City of Shahr-i-Ghulghola.

Advancing on Ghazni, Genghiz won a signal victory over his adversary, Jalalud-din, who falling back towards the Indus basin, contested every inch of his land. Finally, at the bank of this famous river, he made a bold stand. Fortune did not favour him even now. Finding that all was lost, with his own hands he threw the surviving members of his family into the river to escape the wrath of the barbarians. Then riding a swift-footed horse and followed by a few faithful adherents, he jumped into the river, exchanging arrows at the same time with his enemy. This gained him the admiration of Genghiz Khan himself, who decided not to pursue such a dauntless foe. India did not come forward to offer help to a brave son of a cowardly father, on the contrary Iltutmish, the slave ruler of Delhi, politely dismissed him with the remark that the climate of Delhi would not suit him.

Genghiz did not follow his success deep into the Indian territory. Turning back, he came to Afghanistan via Peshawar. The gallant resistance put up by the Afghans brought a dreadful retribution. The whole of the country, from Herat and Balkh right up to Kandahar, Ghazni and Kabul, was turned into a wilderness, and hundreds and thousands of people were ruthlessly butchered. Even to this day Afghanistan has not fully recovered from the shock materially or spiritually.

The Mongol invasion, in fact, had a very deep and lasting effect on the cultural development of Afghanistan. It may safely be called a dividing line, or a gulf, between what preceded and what followed this terrific catastrophe. The culture of the country that had been so dynamic and creative, declined rapidly, losing its expansive vigour.

In particular it seemed to grow complacent and with it lost its capacity for growth. A wave of pessimism and fatalism spread throughout the length and breadth of the country. The idea that life is evil and escape the only worthwhile goal gained ground. Every misfortune, for which they themselves were responsible, was looked upon as preordained and as punishment for their past sins and evil deeds. It was also believed that to combat these mishaps and diseases was beyond the means and power of human beings. This pessimistic philosophy restricted initiative, and with it the spirit of innovation was gone ; intellectual activities diminished and civilisation began to decline. People took to penance and rigid austerity.

The wholesale destruction of the learned, libraries and rich literary traditions had far-reaching effects on the literacy of the country. Schools and colleges were razed to the ground, and those few of the scholars who had escaped this general slaughter had to seek new homes in distant lands. They took shelter in India, Egypt and far off Asia Minor. One of the Afghan families, destined to play an important part in the cultural uplift of the Muslim world, was the family of Maulana Jalal-ud-din Balkhi, who had left its home only a year or two before the Genghizian hordes poured into the country and destroyed Balkh. Jalal-ud-din, who was then a boy of eleven, and of whom we will speak in detail later, had hardly reached Baghdad when he heard of the destruction of his nativeland.

**The Descendants of Genghiz Khan.**

Genghiz died in 1227, and soon after his death, his vast empire fell to pieces. The local chiefs in some parts of the country succeeded in establishing independent principalities. This state of anarchy and chaos lasted until the close of the 14th century, when Timur the Lame, or as he is better known, Tamerlane, came to power.

During this time in Central Asia Muslim culture was gradually conquering these ferocious nomads and softening their savagery to a great extent. Slowly they gave up their nomadic pursuits, and, accepting Islam, established themselves in Transoxiana and took to a sedentary life. One of these was Timur, who, too, was a Mongol

by origin, though his barbarity had been softened to some extent by his embracing of Islam. On his mother's side he was a direct descendant of Genghiz Khan. Timur repeated the horrors of the Mongol invasion, though on a smaller scale.

He was born in the village of Khoja Ilghar, in the neighbourhood of Shahr-i-Sabz, in 1336. Nothing is known of the early years of his life, though we can presume that like Genghiz he, too, began his career as the leader of a robber-gang in those troubled years that followed the disruption of the Mongol empire. Timur took part in the struggle between the Chaghatais and the Mughals, often changing sides. In one of the encounters in Seistan, his right leg was lamed ; hence he got the nickname of "Lang", that is Lame. Gradually he rose to power and was ultimately able to lay the foundation of an empire extending from the borders of China to the heart of Asia Minor. He appointed Shah Rukh, one of his sons, who had accompanied him in his western expeditions as far as Palestine, the governor of Khurasan. The Prince resided at Herat, and, after the death of his father in 1405, he was able, after a hard struggle against various claimants, to ascend the throne and make Herat the capital of his empire. This was the beginning of the Timurid Dynasty of Herat, which was destined to last for more than a century. But before writing about this important period of Afghan history, it would not be out of place to give the biography of the great Sufi poet of Balkh, who was fortunate enough to leave his homeland shortly before Genghiz took possession of it. Migrating west, he ultimately took his residence at a place called Konya, in Asia minor, and laid the foundation of a great school of thought, known as the School of Maulana or Maulavi.

**Maulana Jalal-ud-din Balkhi.**

*The Great Sufi Poet and Profound Philosopher*

Jalal-ud-din Muhammed, better known as Maulavi or Maulana-i-Balkhi or Rumi, is without doubt the greatest Sufi Poet of his age. His father, Mohammad bin Hassan al-Khatibi, popularly known as Shaikh Baha-ud-din, was a man of deep learning and a Sufi of considerable fame, who had inherited in an

ample measure the traditions of his family in the realm of knowledge and spiritual eminence. He bore the title of "Sultan-ul Ulma," the King of Scholars. From his father's side, Maulana set claim to the First Caliph of Islam, Hazrat Abu Bakr Siddiq, while on his mother's side he was descended from the famous saint Sultan Ibrahim Adham. His grandfather, Hassan Ibn Ahmad al-Khatibi, was also an acknowledged spiritual leader, who had married Malaka-i-Jahan, a princess of Khwarizmshahi dynasty.

Maulana Jalal-ud-din was born at Balkh (northern Afghanistan) on September 30, 1207 A. D. (the 6th of Rabiwal Awwal, 604 A. H.). At the time of his birth, his father Baha-ud-din was an old man of fifty-nine, and was at the height of his popularity. He was destined to live another twenty-five years to see his son, to whom he was greatly attached, brought up in the true traditions of his family. His influence on the development of his son's personality was certainly very deep and lasting.

Maulana was only a child when the jealousies of Mohammed Khwarizmshah and his courtiers compelled Bahaud-din to bid goodbye to his motherland and to proceed westward with all the members of his family. It is related that the popularity of Maulana's father, Baha-ud-din, had reached the stage where the King of Khwarizm thought that he had a design on his throne. Growing suspicious of his ever-increasing power, the King sent him the keys of his treasury. Baha answered that he was not after wordly glory and was quite prepared to leave his home to remove all misgivings from the King's mind.

Leaving Balkh in an atmosphere surcharged with deep intrigues and jealousies, the party came to Nishapur, where young Maulana met Farid-ud-din Attar, another Sufi poet of great fame. It is said that having discerned in the forehead of the boy shadows of coming events, Attar gave him a copy of his famous book, Asrar-Nama (Book of Mysteries), and informed his father that the child would some day become renowned throughout the Islamic world for his knowledge and piety.



*H. E. Sayid Shamsud-Din Majrooh*
*Minister of Justice*

*Sayid Majrooh, as his* nom de plume *indicates, is of an afflicted heart. An outstanding writer and poet of modern Afghanistan, he is a keen and enthusiastic supporter of the present progressive movement. Having considerable command over Pushto and Persian, Majrooh's contribution to the literature of these two languages is of immense value. Like Ulfat, he too in his verses, bewails the backwardness of his compatriots and incites them to hard work, honest labour and pursuit of knowledge and useful arts. Majrooh wields great influence in the literary circles and his share in the cultural uplift of the country is yet to be properly gauged.*

From Nishapur, Baha, with his family, went to Baghdad, the metropolis of Islam, where he was warmly received by the well-known Sufi dignitary, Shaikh Shahab-ud Din Suhrawardy. The Abbasid Caliph, with a view to winning his favour, sent him a purse of money, which Baha declined politely saying that he was not going to accept money unlawfully acquired. He even refused to meet the Caliph, but agreed to give a sermon in the great mosque, when the Caliph himself was present. In his speech Baha had the courage to reproach the Caliph to his face for leading a life of pleasure, warning him at the same time of the dire consequences of such a life and of the approaching danger of the Mongolian hordes. Baha was still at Baghdad when the news came that Balkh, his native town, had fallen into the hands of ruthless barbarians and was entirely blotted out (1220).

From Baghdad Baha went to Macca. After performing the pilgrimage, he proceeded to Zinjan, where the ruler of the place, Fakhr-ud Din Bahramshah, a great patron of learning, accorded him a most enthusiastic reception. From Zinjan the party went to Lorinda and settled down to a life of comparative peace. Maulana, who was now eighteen years old, married a lady named Gohar Khatun, daughter of Khawaja Sharaf-ud Din Samarqandi. This lady bore him three sons, Alaud Din, Bahaud Din Sultan and Muzaffarud Din. After the death of his wife, who passed away shortly after her third son, Maulana married a second wife, Kara Khatun, from whom he had a son and a daughter.

It was at the invitation of Alaud Din Kaikubad, the Seljuk King of Asia Minor, that the family moved to Konya (Iconium), the capital of the Empire, and decided to settle there permanently. It was from now onwards that Maulana got the title of "Rumi"*.

Maulana was a young man of twenty-two when he went to Konya, and except for his travels to foreign lands in pursuit of knowledge, he lived there for the rest of his life. He died in

*The term Rumi comes from Rome and was applied to the Byzantine Empire by the Muslim writers. When the Seljuk Turks took possession of Asia Minor, the term Rumi was retained, and later on when the Ottoman Turks conquered the country, they too were called Rumi.

1273 A. D. (672 A. H.), and was buried in the same city where his mausoleum stands to this day.

On the death of his father in 1231, young Maulana, who was hardly twenty-four, took the professional chair and was to hold aloft the banner of spiritualism bequeathed by his father. Maulana had acquired various subjects—theology, logic, metaphysics, philosophy and mathematics—from Bahaud Din, who was keenly devoted to his son and was sincerely anxious to impart to him the best education that was possible in those days. Before his death, he had appointed his trusted and able disciple, Burhanud Din Muhaqqaq Tirmizi, as a tutor to look after Maulana's education. When Baha died, Burhan was not in Konya. He arrived there one year after the death of his Master, and made up his mind to bequeath to his pupil the spiritual treasure which he had inherited from Baha. This period of intensive training lasted for about nine years, after which Maulana went to Syria to continue his studies at Halab (Aleppo) and Damascus, two important centres of Islamic learning. The duration of his stay in these two cities was probably seven years.

Maulana, on his return to Konya, was an acknowledged teacher and a great leader of thought. Well-versed in religious science, philosophy and morals, he now embarked on a career of imparting his knowledge to others, which was to have a powerful influence on the Muslim world. His teaching soon won a great name for him, but he was yet to attain immortality by writing his great *Mathnavi*—the Kuran in Pahlavi.

As a teacher, he was busy imparting religious knowledge, giving legal opinions on matters of law, and having occasional discussions with Ulama. In the midst of these activities, one day suddenly a great change came over Maulana, which made him leave his academic career and become a mystic, and this at a time when all over the Muslim world people had learned to respect him for his vast knowledge and sound philosophy. So great was his prestige that kings and princes came to him from far and wide and considered it a great honour to sit at his feet and listen

to his discourses. It was at such a time that his life underwent a sudden and revolutionary change, and his career as a professor came to an end.

This indeed was the beginning of his spiritual mission and of the writing of the great *Mathnavi.* There are different versions as to how this change was brought about. The most popular of these is this:

One day, 26th of Jamadi-ul Akhir, 642 A. H. (1246 A. D.), when Maulana was busy lecturing with a heap of books lying before him, there came "a weird figure wrapped in coarse black felt." After formal greetings, the stranger took his seat in a corner. Maulana, who was busy with his discourse, did not like this interruption. The visitor, observing this, went forward and, pointing to the heap of books asked : "What is this ?" Maulana, already irritated by his intrusion, said shortly : "You don't know". Then ignoring the man, he tried to continue his lecture, when all of a sudden he saw the pile of books catching fire. Greatly bewildered by this untoward happening, Maulana got excited and, turning to the new comer, asked: "What is this?" The stranger repeated Maulana's own words : "You don't know." Saying this he quietly went out of the lecture room. Maulana, leaving his books and audience, went after him.

This incident resulted in Maulana's rapid abandonment of the garb and status of a professor. He quickly succumbed to the spiritual influence of Shams, who was to him Insan-i-Kamil (the Perfect Man). Maulana in one of his Rubayiats (quatrains) refers to the effect Shams had on him in these words :

"I was a devout man, you made me a singer of song,
You converted me into a wine-bibber, a drunkard and a sot.
I was a grave man of prayer,
You made me the sport of boys in the street."

There are some controversies as to the immediate cause of this conversion, but all agree that the change was sudden and unexpected. The result in all the versions appears to be the same. The learned and respected professor gave up lecturing and became

a rapturous devotee of Shams. This naturally aroused the hatred and jealousies of Maulana's townsmen, students and admirers, who were now deprived of the teaching and advice of such an eminent scholar. They were also shocked to see their leader flouting religious dogmas and conventions, which he had hitherto fervently preached and adhered to. A person, who was once considered to be an authority on all religious matters, who had looked down upon music as irreligious, now for the first time became a great lover of it. It is said that he had a pillar in his house. Holding it with both of his hands, he would turn round it till he had fallen into ecstasy. For hours he would listen to music and dance like the Derveshes. His afflicted heart and soul would find solace and composure in music alone. Maulana's disciples and pupils ascribed all this to the 'evil influence" of the newcomer and looked upon Shams as the sole cause of his change. Shams was not ignorant of what was going on around him. He decided to leave, but Maulana would not let him go and entreated him thus:

"You are the light of my house, don't leave me alone.

I have heard you intend going away; don't do so.

You want to bestow your love and favours on a new friend and rival,

For God's sake do not do it."

All these remonstrances and requests were of no avail, and Shams decided to leave and take refuge in flight. For some time his whereabouts were not known to Maulana, then Rumi received a letter from his master from Damuscus. Maulana wrote several letters and odes requesting Shams to come back to Konya. When these were of no avail, he sent Sultan Walad, his son, to Syria to prevail upon Shams to return. Sultan Walad was successful in his mission and in 1241 Shams came back to Konya. Maulana's disciples, who were responsible for driving out Shams in the vain

hope of curing their teacher, now repenting their folly, assured him of their whole-hearted loyalty and co-operation. They said:

"We repent our folly, forgive us,
If we repeat it, then curse us."

But shortly afterwards the fickle-minded people, forgetting their pledges, grew jealous of Shams once more. It hurt the people to see their respected teacher going 'mad' under the charms of Shams, so they conspired against him; Maulana's own son, Alaud-din, was one of the conspirators. The result was that Shams disappeared mysteriously from the scene (1248). Some think that he was stabbed to death. For a long time Maulana would not believe that his great master was dead, and he consoled his afflicted heart by writing odes, expressing his sentiments thus:

"Who says that that ever-lasting man has passed away?
Who says that the Sun of my hope has eclipsed ?
That enemy of the Sun appeared on the roof
Shutting his two eyes, he exclaimed : "The Sun has set."

This state of unrest and worry lasted some two years, after which Maulana was able to write his great works. It is related that one day when Maulana was dancing in one of the streets of Konya, his attention was suddenly arrested by the rhythmical sound of a goldsmith's hammer. Salahud-din Zarkob was busy making silver leaves. Maulana was completely enthralled by this musical sound. The goldsmith, seeing this, continued using his hammer with greater activity. This was the beginning of friendship between Salah and Maulana which lasted for nine years. Maulana not only gave him his confidence, but loved him to the extent of adoration. After meeting this man, the clouds of worry and disappointment disappeared, and Maulana once more took to writing. We hear him bursting into lyrics—the *Dewan*, which he dedicated to his lost teacher, Shams-i-Tabrizi. The goldsmith died in 1261, and his death unhinged Maulana's mind for some time. When he was himself again, he sat down to compose his voluminous *Mathnavi*, which writing lasted until his death in 1273. Maulana was thirty-five when he met Shams. Until then he had not written a single verse, but after the meeting he was able to write poetry

of the highest order. The *Mathnavi* is a sublime composition rich in spiritual allegory, wherein its author tries to expound the inmost sense of the prophetic revelation. Anyone looking through the work cannot help admiring its lucidity and imaginative range. Its diction is at once choice and simple, and its metaphors and illustrations embody sound moral teaching. Whereas in his odes he often writes from the standpoint of the mystic, who sees nothing but God, the *Mathnavi* shows him as an eloquent speaker and enthusiastic teacher explaining the way of God for the benefit of those who have entered upon it. A mere rendering of a few lines of the *Mathnavi* will illustrate this point. Our Balkhi poet and philosopher uses the reed-flute as a symbol for the soul of a man—man in love with the Truth, who sings in the name of flute, which has been cut from the field and is being used by a player. The keynote is struck in the opening lines, when the reed-flute represents the soul separated from God :

"Hark, how the Reed with shrill sad strain
Of Lovers' parting doth complain :
'From the reed-bed since I was born,
My songs make men and women mourn,
Love's pain and passion to impart,
I want a sympathizing heart.
He pines, the wretch who far must roam,
For his old happiness and home."

Again he sings in the same strain :

"Since, I, the Flute, have been cut from my parent tree,
I wail and sing to the four winds,
Of separation from that of which I am a part.
Like unto that Flute we are,
Like unto it we have two mouths ;
One end is the mouth of the Creator,
The other blows the song
Towards the children of men ;
Of love and warning I sing,
Says the Flute
And I put the world into ecstasy,
Into the ecstasy of a mystic song."

Maulana knows no religion but that of love, which he thinks transcends all barriers of caste, creed and colour. In one of his poems he gives expression to his religious feelings thus :

"O Muslims, how is it that I don't know myself?
I am neither a Christian, nor a Jew, nor a Zoroastrain nor a Muslim,
Nor of the land, nor of the ocean,
I am not from natural mine, not a part of whirling heaven,
I am not from India, China, Bulgaria or Saqseen,
My place is placeless and my trace is traceless,
I have neither body nor soul, for I belong to the soul of the Beloved."

Maulana thinks rites and creed count little with God, who dwells neither in mosque nor church nor temple, but in the pure hearts. The essential thing to him is a complete moral transformation, only to be gained by ardent faith and humble prayer. He says :

"Fools laud and magnify the mosque,
While they survive to oppress holy men of heart ;
But the former is mere form, the latter spirit and truth.
The only true mosque is in the heart of saints
Which is the place of worship for all, for God dwells there."

The moral purpose by which the *Mathnavi* is inspired asserts itself even in philosophical passages describing the emanation of the One Being through every grade of existence. This process is epitomized in the evolution of the soul which, in the form of universal reason, descends to the material world, passes through the mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms, attains to rationality in man, suffers probation, undergoes retribution, ascends to the sphere of the angles, and continues its spiritual development until it is reunited with the Infinite One, of which it is the mirror. It then realises that all its experience of separation was only a dream. Here are Maulana's own lines :

"First he appeared in the realm inanimate ;
Thence came into the world of plants and lived

The plant life many a year, nor called to mind
What he had been; then took the onward way
To animal existence, and once more
Remembers not of that life vegetive,
Save when he feels himself moved with desire
Towards it in the season of sweet flowers,
As babes that seek the breast and know not why.
Again the wise Creator whom thou knowest
Uplifted him from animality
To man's estate; and so from realm to realm
Advancing, he became intelligent,
Cunning and keen of wit, as he is now.
No memory of his past abides with him,
And from his present soul he shall be changed.
Though he is fallen asleep, God will not leave him,
In this forgetfulness. Awakened, he
Will laugh to think what troublesome dreams he had,
And wonder how his happy state of being
He could forget and not perceive, that all
These pains and sorrows were the effect of sleep
And guile and vain illusion. So the world
Seems lasting, though, 'tis but the sleeper's dream;
Who, when the appointed Day shall dawn, escapes
From dark imaginings that haunted him;
And turns with laughter on his phantom griefs,
When he beholds an everlasting home.
Be sure, the Day of Judgment will draw out
What good or ill soever thou hast done
In this life, and interpret all thy dream.
O tyrant, who didst tear the innocent,
Thou from this heavy slumber shall arise;
A wolf, thy wicked passion one by one
Made howling wolves to rend thee limb by limb."

Space forbids further quotations from this great and many-sided poem, which expresses the spirit of Afghan mysticism with a power and insight which have never been equalled.

Maulana in his *Mathnavi* tries to drive home a subtle point by means of analogies, and this is one of the chief factors which has led to the popularity of his works. "The *Mathnavi*," says Professor R. A. Nicholson, "is a majestic river, calm and deep, meandering through many a rich and varied landscape to the immeasurable ocean." Dr. Mohammad Iqbal, the well-known Muslim poet and philosopher, looked upon Maulana as his spiritual master and acknowledged his indebtedness to this great leader of thought. To him 'the world of today needs a Rumi to create an attitude of hope, and to kindle the fire of enthusiasm for life.' Similarly, Ali Asghar Hikmat speaks of the high personality of Balkhi in these words :

> "I for one consider Maulana Jalaluddin too great to be compared with any other famous thinker, reformer, saint or scholar. His equal has to be sought, if at all, among the divines possessed of the secrets of God or the great spiritual lovers who were free from material limitations."

Simple, sincere and selfless, Maulana was respected by all, for he had nothing but love and goodwishes for them. Being broad-minded, he stood for tolerance and co-existence. It was through his spirit of toleration and love that he won the unflinching admiration and respect of all those who came into contact with him. It is said that after his death, when the coffin was being carried to the graveyard, mourners of all creeds followed the funeral procession, shedding tears and expressing sorrows. A Christian was asked what made him weep over the death of a Muslim. He replied, "We esteemed him for his vast knowledge and the spirit of tolerance. To us he was the Moses, the David, and the Christ of the time, and we all are proud to be called his disciples." There could be no better tribute to the memory of this great man, who had nothing but love for humanity irrespective of creed, caste or country. According to him love is the motive force that makes everything travel restlessly towards its origin. It is love that animates music and gives beauty to life. Love and love alone can solve most of our complicated problems

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*The Life and Thought of Rumi, by Afzal Iqbal, Lahore, p. 8.

with which we are faced today. And love is not logic; it is understood best by experience and practice. In Maulana's own words:

> "Through love bitter things become sweet,
> Through love bits of copper turn gold,
> Through love thorns become roses, and
> Through love vinegar tastes like sweet wine."

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CHAPTER XXII

# THE KURTS OF HERAT*

Among the petty dynasties that sprang up in Khurasan and Persia shortly after the Mongolian hordes swept over Central Asia, one is known by the name of Kurts. These Kurts are believed by some historians to be the descendants of the Ghorids, though other authorities trace their origin to the Seljuks. The Kurts ruled over extensive territories from their capital at Herat for a period of about 140 years, from 1245 to 1381 A. D. Like the Samanids and the Ghaznavids, they too were great patrons of men of letters. They also promoted and patronized architecture and other arts, and succeeded to a great extent in repairing the damages done to Herat and the adjacent country by the Mongols in their repeated invasions of Khurasan. They erected grand buildings and decorated them with delicate and artistic ornaments.

Malik Shamsuddin, the founder of the dynasty, came to power in 1245. It is said that when the Mongols drew up their military plan to attack Herat, their forces met stiff resistance at a fortress called Qala-i-Khysar, somewhere near Ghor. The Mongols, finding that force was of no avail, came to terms with the warden of the fortress, Malik Shamsuddin Kurt, and recognized him as de facto ruler of Herat and the adjacent country on the condition that he would remain loyal to them. This was the beginning of the Kurt dynasty. During the rule of this family, Herat, in spite of the ravages it had suffered at the hands of the Mongols, gradually regained its past prosperity and became one of the flourishing cities of Central Asia.

One of the important writers of this age is Sayf bin Mohammed bin Yaqub, who adopted the nom de plume of Sayfi.

*Extracted from an article written by Ali Mohammed Zahma, Professor at the Faculty of Letters, Kabul University.

He was in Herat in 1282 A. D., and was educated in Islamic sciences and in Arabic and Persian literature. His masterpiece is a history entitled 'Tarikh-i-Sayfi Harawi."

Sayfi entered the court of Malik Fakhar-ud-din Kurt, successor of Shamsuddin, in 1307. Later, Sayfi was ordered by the brother of the Sultan, Malik Ghias-ud-din, to compile a history of Herat from its invasion by Genghiz Khan till his own time. The author had planned to divide the work into several volumes, devoting the first to the general history and reserving the rest for the biographical notices of the nobles and important State officials. This is obvious from his remark in the introduction where he says that he compiled the history in 4000 discourses, whereas the present Thrikh (Nama-i-Herat) contains only 138 of them. Muin-ud-din, the author of the "Rauza-ut-Jannat", is of opinion that Sayfi could not compose the second volume. The Tarikh-Nama-i-Herat is divided into 138 discourses ; the first twenty dealing with the founding of Herat, its invasion by Genghiz Khan, and, its history until the advent of the Kurt dynasty. The last 118 discourses deal with the various aspects of the history of the Kurt rule from its foundation in 1245 until the sixteenth year of the reign of Malik Ghias-ud-din, to whom alone 39 discourses are devoted. The "Tarikh-Nama" is of great historical importance and of much literary value. It is a contemporaneous record of the complicated events in the history of Herat and its dependencies in a tumultuous and difficult period.

Maulana Muin-ud-din of Isfazar is another famous historian of this time. His book "Rauza-ut-Jannat" was written for Sultan Hussain Abdul Ghazi and covers the period of history up to 1470 A. D. The book is divided into 26 Rauzas (gardens). Of these Rauzas seven to ten deal exclusively with the Kurt dynasty.

Of the poets of this period mention should be made of Rabi-i. His full name is Sadr-ud-din. He was the son of a preacher of Pushang (Fushang) near Herat. According to Rabi-i's own statement, he was born in 1272 A. D. Rabi-i had a natural talent for the art of poetry, which he developed at an early age. He came into touch with Malik Fakhr-ud-din in 1302 and was appointed

by him as his court panegyrist. The Malik, who himself was a poet of no mean merit, having discerned Rabi-i's special gift for poetry, ordered him to compose the "Kurt-Nama". He paid him one thousand dinars every year for a period of six years, during which time the poet was occupied with this task. In addition to this allowance, the Malik bestowed upon him periodically rich rewards and large gifts, and showed him every possible kindness and favour. However, Rabi-i was extremely greedy and he never felt satisfied with what he received from the Malik. The book, was nevertheless, compiled and was entitled "Kurt-Nama". The greedy poet soon fell out with his patron and left Herat to seek his fortune elsewhere. Being disappointed in his efforts, he was recalled by Malik Fakhr-ud-din. The ungrateful poet shortly after conspired against his patron, and was accordingly put into prison. Rabi-i, realizing his folly, compsed a poem called "Kar-Nama" wherein he sought to move the Malik to pity. All these appeals were of no avail and the poet died in prison.

The "Kurt-Nama" of Rabi-i is an historical Mathnawi, written in a style of the "Shah-Nama" of Firdausi, describing the history of the Kurt rulers of Herat from their rise until about 1302, when the author was put into prison by his patron. It was composed in six years, probably between 1295 and 1302 A. D.

Unfortunately, this valuable source appears to have been lost and so its historical and literary value cannot be properly gauged. More than 250 couplets from differert parts of the "Kurt-Nama" are quoted in the Tarikh-Nama by Sayfi Harawi. These couplets clearly show the delicate and vivid imagination of the poet. The book appears to have been not only a valuable record but also verse of high literary value.

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CHAPTER XXIII

# RENAISSANCE OF ART AND LITERATURE UNDER THE TIMURIDS OF HERAT

Tamerlane's successors, called the Timurids, were on the whole enlightened people and great patrons of arts and knowledge. During this period, which lasted for more than a century (1405-1519), Afghanistan enjoyed peace and prosperity, and was slowly rising from the shock it had received at the hands of the Mongols and Tamerlane. With their capital at Herat, the Timurids enriched the city with fine buildings and extended their patronage to arts, literature, philosophy, calligraphy and architecture. This is why the period is often called the Renaissance of Afghan art and literature. The first king of this line, Shah Rukh, was the most worthy son of Tamerlane. He was an enlightened monarch and and a man of high literary taste. Timur had appointed his grandson, Pir Mohammed, as his sole heir. But when the news of Timur's death spread, a fight for power ensued among the various claimants to the throne. Of these Shah Rukh, his fourth son and governor of Khurasan, was finally able to ascend the throne with the greater part of his father's empire in his possession. He made Herat his capital and appointed Ulugh Beg, his eldest son, governor of Samarqand.

Shah Rukh's first concern on ascending the throne was to restore peace and order in his vast empire extending from Trans-oxiana to Azerbaijan. Fortunately he had a gifted wife, Gohar Shad Agha, who greatly assisted the King in the administration of the country and in the erection of mosques, madrassas, khaneqahs and buildings of public utility. Her name is specially associated with the Gohar Shad Mosque in Meshad, a piece of fine art still extant.

Shah Rukh was a great patron of poets, artists and men of letters, and by his liberal encouragement to scholars, he soon made Herat culturally and commercially a great centre of art and learning and a metropolis of Central Asia. Being a wise ruler, he developed very cordial relations with distant China. Timur, shortly before his death, was thinking of marching on China. But on reaching Otrar, his border town, he was suddenly taken ill, which malady proved fatal on February 8, 1405. On ascending the throne, Shah Rukh wisely abandoned the plan of campaign against China, and to show his sincerity, he released the Chinese ambassador whom his father had detained. This naturally led to the improvement of friendly relations between the two countries.

In 1408, An-Chi-Tao, who had been the head of the Chinese embassy to Timur, was again sent by China to the west. He arrived in Herat in 1409, bringing with him condolences from the the Emperor of China to Shah Rukh on the demise of his father.

The embasssy staff returned to China in the same year accompanied by ambassadors from Herat and Samarqand. In 1410, a second Chinese embassy passed through Bish-Baligh on its way to Samarqand and in the same year an ambassador from Herat arrived in China. The Chinese ambassador reached Herat in 1412 and was accorded a most enthusiastic reception. Other embassies were exchanged between the two countries at different intervals. In 1419, an ambassador was despatched to the Emperor bearing monograph letters from Shah Rukh. Two years later, Ulugh Beg presented the Emperor with a fine black horse with white legs, which was greatly appreciated.

Similarly, commercial relations greatly developed between the two countries during this period. In 1432, the Chinese Emperor requested Shah Rukh to afford facilities and protection to the Chinese merchants travelling in his country. Chinese sources also quote the text of a similar letter from the Emperor Cheng-Tung to Ulugh Beg in 1445.

One of the main items of China's export was chinaware, the production of which had attained a high degree of perfection in the 15th century. In one of the gardens outside the town, Ulugh



*Her Royal Highness Princess Bilqis*

*Princess Bilqis, the accomplished daughter of His Majesty the King, is like her illustrious father, endowed with the culture of East and West. A lady of extremely cultural taste, she is the forerunner of the present progressive movement among Afghan women. By every means in her power, she tries to ameliorate their condition and lead them on towards a better and happier life. The Princess takes a very keen interest in social gatherings, making speeches and distributing prizes to encourage Afghan women to take to education and other useful arts and professions and thereby shoulder new responsibilities of an international life.*

Beg had a pavilion, the inner walls of which were entirely decorated with china brought to Transoxiana in several consignments.

Shah Rukh, dying in 1447, was succeeded by his only surviving son, Ulugh Beg. In his father's time he was the governor of Samarqand, which he ruled wisely. Now, on coming to the throne, he made up his mind to follow in the footsteps of his illustrious father. Like Shah Rukh he was benevolent and a great patron of men of letters. He was rather ahead of his time and a product of a more enlightened age, for he held the study of sciences above every other subject. His special field of interest was astronomy, which has been preserved in his name, "the astronomor-king," even to this day. He is the author of the most accurate astronomical tables (called Zich-i-Ulughbegi), that the East has bequeathed to the West. He is credited with having built a fine observatory at Samarqand. Besides, he built a large number of madrassas, *khaneqas* and public baths, some of which have proved to be the most enduring of his constructions. His name is also associated with a group of charitable foundations.

Unfortunately, the reign of this astronomer-king was a very short one, for he met a tragic death at the hands of his son, Abdul Latif, in 1449. But this parricide did not reign more than six months, for he was then murdered by one of the loyal servants of his father, in 1450. Due to this the country was once more involved in chaos and anarchy. Several princes came to power but were not able to hold their positions for a long time. This state of affairs continued until Sultan Hussain Bayaqra came to the throne (1468).

Sultan Hussain is undoubtedly the greatest king of this line, and one of the most prominent figures in history. His reign, which lasted until 1506, from the literary as well as from the artistic point of view, is one of the brightest chapters of Afghan history. Firtunately, the king had a brilliant Wazir, Amir Sher Ali Nawai, who like his enlightened master, was a patron of art and learning. He succeeded in creating at the capital a remarkable centre of art and literature, which may rightly be called the culmination of this wonderful renaissance.

The King and the Wazir were not only patrons of art and letters, but they themselves were men of fine literary taste who wrote in prose and verse with great success. It it not possible to describe the life and works of all the literary figures and artists of this illustrious period. We, therefore, will confine ourselves to two of the most prominent ones, Bihzad the painter, and Jami the great Sufi poet, who contributed to the lustre of Sultan Hussain's court and who have made his name immortal in history.

**Bihzad.**

Bihzad, whose real name was Kamalud-din, was born at Herat in 1440. He lost his parents when he was a young boy. Fortunately, destiny put his guardianship into the hands of a famous painter, named Mirak Aqa. With his help, Bihzad developed a taste for miniature-painting. This young artist soon attracted the attention of Sultan Hussain and his gifted Wazir, Amir Ali. They patronized Bihzad and appointed him as the head of the newly-established Academy of Arts. Here Bihzad was able to produce his best miniatures, which contributed to the perfection of this art.

It was Bihzad who by his dynamic energy and dramatic invention, re-vitalised a tradition of picture-making which was in danger of becoming static or too luxuriously decorative. Bihzad also has a marvellous delicacy of line, which is perhaps what his countrymen most appreciated in his works. Some of these paintings are of exceptional originality. Probably his style underwent considerable change due to Chinese influence. Certain borrowings from China persist in his art ; dragons and other fabulous animals are constantly used in decoration, as well as the mode of drawing curling wisps of cloud.

The art born and cradled in the court of Timur, the world-shaker of his age, could not conceivably be soft and sentimental. The scenes of battles and sieges and hunts are naturally frequent. But chivalry and romance, the love of Laila and Majnun, Shireen and Farhad, youths and maidens dallying in a garden by the side of a stream, gorgeous receptions in princely courts, feasts and merriment,

where the wine passes freely round and toothsome viands are spread in plenty are represented equally. And of piety and mysticism there is no lack. Hence scenes are depicted of Dervishes living in wild forest or a lonely cave, leading fierce animals or dancing in ecstasy.

Sometimes his pictures actually deal with the tent life of the Afghan Kochis-nomads. The encampments are made of gorgeous rugs. At the back stand the black, goatskin tents of the nomads; they are lighting their fires, the goats, and sheep are feeding in the crevices of the rocks, and the shepherds are playing their pipes as they look down at the encampment.

When Shah Ismail the Saffavid took Herat in 1510, he prevailed upon Bihzad to go to Tabriz, where he was appointed the director of the Royal Library. Actually this library was an institute of fine arts, where a group of artists were employed to make the Suffavid capital a rival of Herat. The artists of Tabriz came under the influence of the Herat School of Painting ; Bihzad's style is particularly manifest in Tabriz' miniatures.

During this time Herat kept its artistic significance, as numerous students of Bihzad were still there to follow in the footsteps of their Master. When Babar came to India, the star of the Bihzad School was still in the ascendant and its style was looked upon as the standard of perfection. The Chagtai nobles set Bihzad before the Indian artists as their master of painting. When Humayun came to power, he invited Mir Sayid Ali, a student of Bihzad, to India, and it was he who laid the foundation of the Indian Mughal School of Art. Bihzad was active even in his seventies, when he is said to have painted a beautiful miniature depicting a camel fight.

**Jami.**

Nurud-din Abdur Rahman Jami, the well-known mystic poet and scholar of the fifteenth century, was one of the most remarkable personalities ever produced in Afghanistan. Possessing uncommon intellectual powers, imagination and intuitive perception, he was endowed with the highest of gifts, which he used in the most brilliant manner and to the fullest extent. He was a great poet, an eminent scholar and a mystic of high

repute. As a poet, he had no equal in his timc, and is considered to be the last classical poet in the Persian language. Coming almost at the end of a long line of famous poets and mystics, in Jami the mystical thought may be said to have reached its most vivid, mature and complete expression. In him culminated the literary talent of the period, and Jami's claim to be regarded as one of the most notable poets and scholars of Afghanistan is indisputable.

Jami was born at Jam, a small town near Herat, on the 23rd of Shaban, 817 A. H. (November 7, 1414 A. D.), and died at Herat in 1442 (18th of Muharram, 898 A. H.), at the age of seventy-eight Dr. Hermann Ethe gives Khasjird, near Jam, as the birth-place of the poet; but since Jami himself refers more than once to the fact that Jam was his place of birth, we cannot but trust his good memory. Moreover, the poet took his·nom de plume from Jam.

In 1419, Khwaja Mohammed Parsa, a mystic famous for his piety, happened to pass through the little town of Jam *en route* to Hejaz. A large number of people came out of the town to pay homage to the holy man ; among them was the little boy Jami, whom his father had brought to the Khwaja. Jami, writing his impressions of that day some sixty years later, tells us : "The pure lusture of his beaming countenance is even now, as then, clearly visible to me, and my heart still feels the joy I experienced at that happy meeting. I firmly believe that the bond of union, friendship, confidence and love, which subsequently bound the great body of pious spirits to this humble creature, is wholly due to the beneficial influence of his glance, and most devoutly do I trust that the auspiciousness of this union may cause me to be ranked among the number of his friends."

Jami commenced his education at Herat. He strongly objected to the disciplinary methods of instruction. He was not studious as a boy, and preferred games to serious studies, but he was naturally clever and quick at absorbing knowledge with a minimum of labour. It is said of him that he used to snatch a book from one of his fellow students while on his

way to school and excel them all when they were examined in the class.

Jami's instructors were Mulla Junaid and Khwaja Ali Samarqandi. It is said that Jami was so brilliant a scholar that after forty lessons further instruction from his second teacher seemed quite unnecessary. After attending a series of lectures delivered by Qazi Rumi at Samarqand, he succeeded in getting the best of an argument with the learned professor. It might have been expected that the defeat of an older man of letters by young Jami would have produced ill feelings ; but contrary was the case. The learned Qazi, in front of a large assembly, admitted his defeat and praised Jami thus : "Since the building of this city no one equal to Jami in sharpness of intellects and power of using them has ever crossed the Oxus to enter Samarqand."

Jami, since his boyhood, showed a very strong liking for holy men. He was devoutly attached to Shamsud-din Mohammed Asad and Obaidullah Ahrar. The latter alludes to Jami as the "flood of light," and to himself as a "small lamp." Jami's acceptance of Sufism was brought about through a vision in which a spirit appeared to him and said : "Go, O child and wait on one who is indispensable to you." As the message was delivered, Jami got up, and obeying the command, went to Sa'ud-ud-din for spiritual instructions. Under the guidance of this holy man Jami led the life of a rigid ascetic.

On his journey to Mecca, the Sufi poet of Herat was everywhere cordially received. On one occasion, when Jami was at Aleppo, the Sultan of Rum sent his special envoy with a present of five thousand gold pieces if Jami would condescend to meet him at his capital. Before the messenger of the Sultan could reach him, Jami came out of Aleppo and left for Tabriz. Hassan Beg, the governor of Kurdistan, then tried to make Jami stay with him. The poet, declining the offer, continued his journey homeward.

Jami probably wearied with the continued adulation, now decided to retire from public life and devote his time to writing

books. One of the chief reasons why his works are so mature and profound is that most of them were written during the last fifteen years of his long life.

This brilliant and many-sided genius was a prolific writer. His seven poems, jointly called *Haft Aurang*, are among the finest compositions in the Persian language. At least sixty of his works are enumerated, but probaby the list is not exhaustive.

Amir Ali Sher Nawai, the celebrated statesman and scholar, was Jami's personal friend and also biographer. It was these two literary figures who had such a vital influence on the fruitful epoch known as the "Later Timurid period." The king, Sultan Hussain, also treated the poet with utmost kindness and respect.

Jami's life left nothing to be desired. He always enjoyed the most profound respect of his contemporaries and, throughout his life, he was spared the vicissitudes of fortune which some of the greatest poets before him could not escape. Babar considers Jami to be "beyond praise," and Amir Ali has devoted one of his chief works to the life of this poet. It was, therefore, not surprising that Jami's funeral was attended by almost all the members of the royal family, a magnificent train of the most illustrious divines and scholars and a vast assembly of common people, who had come from far and near to pay homage to the most versatile genius of the age.

Jami's *Lawaih* (Flashes or Effulgences of Light) occupies an important place in mystical literature. It was completed in or about 1481, when Jami was about sixty-six years of age. Professor Houben of the Gregorian University of Rome remarks in this connection : "The outstanding significance of the *Lawaih* of Nurud-din Abdur Rahman Jami and the quality which puts this work apart in the list of mystical treatises is that in a scholarly fashion it offers a theological-mystical doctrine of what mind and heart of the mystic-experience in communion with the Divine."

In his *Lawaih* Jami gives expression to his thoughts thus :

God in His infinite wisdom and mercy has made you with one heart, why then do you divide it into a hundred

portions and devote each to a different object? Render thanks for the boon of existence so graciously given to you; turn your back on all besides God and devote yourself on Him alone. Only in loving Him with a single heart you can fulfil the purpose of life. Turn you heart from all and firmly attach it to God. It is only He who always has been, it is only He who always will be."

**The Breakup of the Timurid Dynasty.**

The Timurid dynasty was overrun in the early part of the sixteenth century by the Saffavides of Persia and the Shaibanis, who came from the country north of the Oxus; while Kabul, Ghazni and later on Kandahar, were occupied by Babar, one of the descendants of Tamerlane. The Shaibanis could not maintain their position for a long time, so the greater part of Afghanistan was parcelled out between Babar and Shah Ismail Saffavi. Babar, after losing his ancestral throne in Farghana, turned his attention to south of the Oxus. Then taking advantage of the anarchy prevailing in Kabul, he crossed the Hindu Kush in 1504, and took possession of the city, making it his capital. Later, in 1522 he took Kandahar, and in 1526 won the first battle of Panipat; overthrowing the Afghan dynasty of the Lodis, he laid the foundation of Mughal Empire in India. Afghanistan thus lost its independence. Herat was occupied by the Saffavids, and the Mughals retained the southeastern portion of the country, with Kandahar as a bone of contention between the two empires.

**Monument of Herat.**

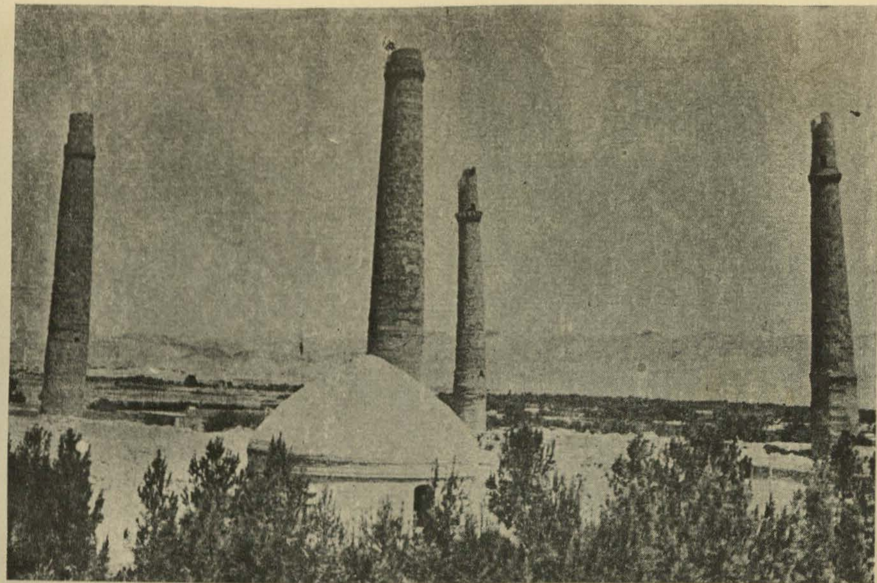
Of the former splendour of Herat, once a great cradle of learning, very little is left. Of these the Mussalla, a group of beautiful buildings outside the city, occupies a prominent position. Originally it comprised three separate buildings, and extended to a length of 1800 feet. Today, however, there remains only the dome and four minarets of the building. It was constructed around 1441 by the orders of Gohar Shad, wife of Shah Rukh, who wanted to have a centre of learning in her

name. Many eminent engineers, designers, masons, artists and calligraphers were employed in the construction of this Madrassa (college), which took nearly twenty years to complete. The arches, covered with the remains of what was once fine tile work of the most beautiful and artistic design, are now much defaced. The tiles on the minarets too have mostly been worn off by the vagaries of weather, but inside the arches the beautiful and brilliant mosaic work, predominantly blue and embellished with passages from the Holy Kuran, is still in many places almost intact, sufficient to give an idea of the building when new.

The minarets of the Madrassa are taller than the rest, rising to 120-150 feet, the top being accessible by stairways some 140 in number. The melon-shaped ribbed dome is about 75 feet in diameter. It is covered with tiles of wonderful turqouise-blue. Unfortunately, with the passing of the centuries much of the vivid craftsmanship has been worn away; nevertheless, the intricate pattern of the tiles is still visible.

The only other building in Herat noticeable for its size and height is the Jama Masjid (the Great Mosque), a large, lofty, arched structure in the north-eastern portion of the city. Its original plan is very old ; it was laid out by Ghiasud Din, Sultan of Ghor, in the latter part of the 12th century. It was then one of the most beautiful buildings ever built in Asia, adorned as it was with the most magnificant carvings, precious mosaics and other elaborate and costly embellishments. Later repairs have not very much altered its austere lines. On the sides of the four "aiwans", gorgeous panellings of glazed tiles of the best Timurid workmanship, predominantly green and blue with the grandeur of their Arabic inscriptions, are still to be seen.

Towards the north of the town, in a grove of pines, lies the Gazargah Sharif, the resting place of Khwaja Abdullah Ansari. The shrine is distinguishable from afar by a huge lofty square-topped mass of building over a high arch. It displays the art of glazed tiles of all possible shades and patterns, all of them gorgeous and yet full of delicate taste. The great *aiwan*, tiled from top to bottom, shows traces of Chinese influence in the arrangement of Kufi characters.



*THE MUSSALAS OF HERAT*

*One of the most important places in Afghanistan, both as regard natural beauty and relics of the past, is Herat. It is on this city that history, man and art have lavished all their attention. One of its most interesting monuments is the Great Mosque. Next comes the Mussalas, a group of tall towers decoarated with beautiful tiles and fine pieces of art-reminiscene of the palmy days of the Timurid Period (15th Century).*

CHAPTER XXIV

# DECAY AND STAGNATION OF AFGHAN CULTURE

The 16th and 17th centuries, when the Afghans were no longer masters of their own destiny, are perhaps the darkest period of Afghan history. With the eclipse of national rule, the culture of the country also suffered heavily. A static society gradually developed, in which inertia, tradition, superstition, fatalism and imitation became the predominant characteristics. The causes of this decay and stagnation were manifold. While it is not possible to pinpoint all the forces which led to this decline and petrification of Afghan culture, two may be signalled out as the first and foremost links in the change of events. One, as already stated, was the loss of power, which had kept alive within the country the spirit of indepence, self-reliance and initiative, qualities so essential and indipensable to a free and creative social order. The loss of power brought about a thorough change. With no natural or national ties binding the rulers with the ruled, Government became the mere instrument of exploitations ; the apathy, the enervating quietism, and the indifference which subsequently permeated the social order are easy to imagine.

The second cause of stagnation may safely be attributed to the discovery of a new route to the East. Afghanistan, which until then held the key position in international trade and was looked upon as the entrepot of merchandise, was now deprived of its central commercial position. The opening of the sea-route from Europe to the East via the Cape of Good Hope in 1498 by Vasco do Gama, dealt a deathblow to the famous Silk Route, which passed through the heart of the country. The loss of this

important link with distant countries and especially with the Western world, stopped the inflow of ideas as well as of wealth. Consequently, poverty, ignorance, disease and superstition crept into the society. The whole of the economic and social structure of the country was transformed. The stagnation and loss of initiative permeated every aspect of life, both material and spiritual. The ascetic outlook encouraged disdain of worldly goods. Indulgence in the satisfaction of the senses was regarded evil, and the suppression of desire was looked upon as virtuous. Property was compared to a snare, unworthy of a man's attention, while renunciation and resignation were regarded the true ideals of human life. The Mughals and the Persians who had laid their hands on Afghanistan, had no interest in the country besides strategical considerations and did nothing for the general welfare of the people. They were quite indifferent to what was going on outside the cities. They left the tribes practically independent in their domestic affairs. They even subsidized those who lived along the routes to keep their lines of communication safe. They were not only pleased to see the tribes immersed in their petty feuds, but in pursuit of their nefarious plans, they instigated these rivalries and strifes, so as to make the tribes utterly oblivious of what was happening in the rest of the country.

Afghan trade during this period lost its international significance. Even internal trade, due to the vivisection of the country, could not be developed on national lines. There were weekly bazaars where goods not ordinarily available were exposed for sale. Cattle and sheep fairs were held occasionally at selected places.

The most interesting institution of this period was an Afghan village, which was an organized body, a small republic, self-sufficient and having nearly all that was in demand by the villagers. It was a world of its own, almost independent and indifferent to any foreign relations. The village community formed a little state in itself. Apart from collecting revenue in kind, the State had little concern with it. Each village had a stronghold, and having developed its own security measures, it could carry on without the help of the Central Government.

The village economy consisted not only in the production of commodities for the satisfaction of primary needs, like food but also the provisions of industry which fulfilled the requirements of the village. Among these were spinning and weaving, metal work, carpentry, leatherwork etc. Each worker, who produced the articles required, got a customary share of crops from the receiver. The nexus of cash was practically delimitated and the economic motive was replaced by personal service.

Apart from its cultural and economic functions, what made an Afghan village an institution of unique interest was its system of self-government. The village was concerned with the maintenance of peace and order, which involved the duties of police, magistracy and justice. These duties were administered by the village Khan, Malik or Kalantar, and the tribal Jirgah. The headman, Kalantar or Malik, was the most important personality. He was responsible for the collection of government revenue, supervision of village affairs, including watch and ward, and summoning the village Jirgah. He was the representative of the whole community in all transactions with the government. The priest, the Mullah as he was called, was also the village teacher and held a prominent position.

The Jirgah was the authority of settling disputes and dispensing justice. Cases of breach of contracts, disputes about boundaries, distribution of water, claims to land and pasture, and infringement of customs, grant or inheritance were all within the jurisdiction of the Jirgah. Sometimes even criminal cases were also settled in this important tribal assembly. The Jirgah, in those days of anarchy and chaos, was a permanent institution, but its meetings were held only when the need arose. The members were elected by the whole body of the villagers, mostly from among the elderly persons of experience, knowledge and character. There were no pleaders and no records were maintained.

**National Risings Against the Mughals and the Persians.**

The Mughals, who had destroyed Afghan rule both in India and Afghanistan, were trying their best to reconcile the Afghans to their rule, and to make them forget their glorious past. Great care

was taken in the appointment of governors at Kabul. The tribes were practically left free to look after their own affairs. Some of them were regularly subsidized to guarantee the free passage of Mughal troops through their territories. But all these measures proved futile, and the freedomloving Afghans were never content with their lot, nor did they forget that before the Mughals they were the masters of their own destiny as well as of India's. From the days of Babar, in the beginning of the 16th century, right up to the death of Aurangzeb (1707), they carried on the war of liberation with ever-increasing zeal, and inflicted many a crushing and humiliating defeat on the imperial forces. But unfortunately, the tribes did not rise as a body to fight the enemies of their country and their mutual jealousies contributed a great deal to their failure.

In 1507, Babar took up arms against the Ghilzais, a powerful Afghan tribe living between Ghazni and Kandahar, which had given him much trouble since he took possession of Kabul. After a hot contest, Babar, who had the upper hand, took thousands of their sheep, and erected a minaret of human skulls to strike awe and terror of Mughal arms into the hearts of the tribesmen. But he failed in his attempt, for shortly afterwards he was forced to lead a second expedition against the Yusufzais. Seeing that force was of no avail, he married for political reasons the daughter of an influential Yusufzai chief.

Similarly, in India after the fall of Delhi and Agra, Babar was confronted with serious uprisings of Afghan chiefs in every direction. In his "Memoirs" he bitterly complains of the opposition he had to face in various parts of the country at the hands of the Afghans. In one place he writes : "The Afghan governors of the provinces put their fortifications in defence and refused to submit to me." In another part of his "Memoirs" he again complains in these words : "Sher Khan Sur, on whom I have bestowed marks of favour, to whom I have given several *parganas* (plots of land) and whom I left in that quarter, has also turned against me and joined the ranks of insurgents. When Babar's son Humayun came to power, he found that numerous Afghan

chiefs had established independent principalities all over northern India. Sultan Mahmud Lodi appeared in Bihar and had the support of all the old heads of the Afghan nobility such as Biban and Bayazid. But the most formidable rival of Humayun was Sher Khan who looked upon the Mughals with great contempt, as appears from one of his statements : "If fortune favours me, I can drive these Mughals, the usurpers, back out of India. They are not our superiors in war or even in the art of administration, but we Afghans let slip the power simply by reason of our dissensions. Since I have been among the Mughals, I have observed their conduct minutely, and found them lacking in order or discipline."

A third opponent of Humayun was Alaud-din Lodi, uncle of Ibrahim Lodi. He was one of those traitors who invited Babar to India in the vain hope that the invader after defeating Ibrahim would hand over the reins of government to him. Later on he fell into disgrace and was banished to Badakhshan, where he remained in prison until the death of Babar (1530). After that, effecting his escape, he returned to India, and, collecting a laige force with the help of the ruler of Gujrat, he marched on Agra. He, however, did not succeed in his aim, and was forced to retire from the scene.

It was now for Sher Khan Afghan to bid for the throne. In 1540, he was able to inflict a crushing defeat on Humayun, who, quitting India, fled to Persia in the hope of getting help from Shah Tahmasap Saffavid in the recovery of his Empire. On meeting the Shah, he recounted his pathetic story, how fate had deserted him, and how his enemy, Sher Shah, had deprived him of his throne and crown. The Shah, receiving him with every mark of respect, promised help, reminding him at the same time of the friendly relations that existed between his father and the members of Tamerlane's dynasty. But so long as Sher Shah was alive, neither Humayun nor the Shah of Persia could even think of invading India.

Similarly, Akbar, Humayun's son and successor, had much trouble at the hands of the Afghans. After the fall of Kashmir,

he directed his attention against the northeastern tribes of Afghanistan, who had given him no rest since he came to power. But he met very stiff resistance from these tribes, and the imperial army was routed again and again.

At the same time Bayazid Ansar, popularly known as Pir Roshan (the Enlightened Saint), and the founder of a well-known sect called Roshanian, took up arms against the Mughals. This was not only an armed conflict but a clash of ideology as well. Bayazid was soon able to establish his authority in the hilly districts from the Khyber to the heart of the Sulaiman Range, with an influence over the neighbouring Afghan tribes as well, who looked upon him as their temporal and spiritual leader.

In 1586, Akbar was finally resolved to settling this intricate Afghan question once for all. The chief command of the imperial forces was entrusted to Zain Khan, the Emperor's foster-brother, and to Raja Bir Bal, one of the closest personal friends of Akbar. The Mughals, though far superior in number and equipment, could make little headway. At last, in one of the gorges between Swat and Bajaur, they were all of a sudden surrounded by the Afghans, who overwhelmed them with showers of stones and arrows. Finally, when the Afghans saw that the Mughals had lost their morale, they, rushing down the sides of the hills, fell upon the bewildered soldiers. All attempts to preserve discipline were of no avail. The defeat turned into a rout; men, horses and elephants were huddled together in their flight. A terrible slaughter ensued, and most of the Mughal officers were killed. Nor was Zain Khan more fortunate. At night, when an alarm was heard that the Afghans were coming, the remaining troops again took to their heels, and not a bullet was fired in defence. Taking cover of the night, Zain Khan escaped on foot and made his way to Attock with great difficulty. The news of this defeat spread alarm in the imperial camp, but unfortunately the Afghans, content with the loot, let slip a golden opportunity and no serious attempt was made to follow up the advantage.

After the death of Pir Roshan and his valiant son, Jalal Khan, the war of liberation did not come to an end. It was continued

by his successors with unabated fury, and dragged on during the reign of Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb. Shah Jahan was once faced with a national rising of a very serious nature and the Afghans came very near to establishing an independent kingdom in northern India. They flocked to the standard of Khan Jahan Lodi, son of Daulat Khan, one of Akbar's trusted officers. Like many other patriotic Afghans he, too, cherished the idea of establishing an independent Afghan kingdom in northern India. The imperial forces once more suffered many reverses. But finally Khan Jahan was much depressed at the loss of his sons and followers who were either killed in the battle or made prisoners by the Mughal forces. When all hope of success was lost, Khan Jahan, in accordance with his national custom, preferred death to an ignominous escape. He made a last stand with a handful of loyal followers. In the midst of the struggle that ensued, Madhu Singh pierced him with a spear, and before his friends could come to his help the brave soldier, with his surviving son, Aziz, was cut to pieces.

Even when the religious zeal of the Roshanians wore out with the years, the free spirit of the Afghans was not crushed. They rejected all overtures of peace or reconciliation both from the Mughals of India and for the Saffavids of Persia. It was only in the cities and towns of Afghanistan that foreigners could hold their own by dint of superior organisation and better equipment.

When Aurangzeb came to power, he too could not cope successfully with the Afghan question, and thought it advisable to subsidize the tribes to guarantee the safety of the roads that passed through their territories. The annual subsidies during his reign amounted to 600,000 rupees. Even the expenditure of such a huge sum could not make the Afghans give up their struggle. The result was the repeated tale of the disaster of the Mughal forces.

Another most formidable opponent of Aurangzeb was Khushal Khan Khattak, the soldier-poet, who inspired the Afghans with his pen no less than his sword. His whole life was spent in this noble cause. Though he was not destined to reap the fruit

of his labour, his noble example was vigorously followed by others, and his innumerable sacrifices fired the imagination of his compatriots all over the country. Of these the first to strike successfully was an Afghan chief of the Hotak tribe, Mir Wais by name, who liberated Kandahar from foreign yoke.

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CHAPTER XXV

# PUSHTO LITERATURE

Very little is known of the history of Pushto literature before the sixteenth century. According to some writers, foremost among these being English, the first known writer of Pushto was Bayazid Ansar, entitled Pir Roshan, a cemtemporary of Akbar. The English writers consider him to be the author of a famous book called *Khairul Bayan*. Akhund-i-Dervezah, another famous Pushto writer of this period, is considered to be Roshan's disciple. Next in the line of poets were Khushal Khan Khattak, Rahman Baba, Hameed and Qasim. All these Pushto poets possess a simple, straight and lucid style.

Although we cannot trace the history of Pushto literature with much accuracy further back than four centuries, some years ago a book called *Putta Khazana* (Hidden Treasure) was accidentally found, proving that Pushto literature existed in the country even before the advent of Islam. According to this valuable source the first Pushto poet was Amir Kror, son of Amir Polad, the king of Ghor. It so appears that the author of the *Putta Khazana* has derived much of his information from another book called "Larghoni Pukhtana", which, somehow, fell into the hands of Shah Mahmud Hotaki (1716-1725).

According to *Putta Khazana*, Amir Kror captured the forts of Ghor and Balishtan. It is alleged that he was a very brave man and could fight hundreds single-handed ; hence the epithet *Kror*, meaning brave and hard, was given to him. He died fighting in a battle at Poshanj, near Herat.

Here is the translation of one of his poems, speaking of his valour :

"I am a lion, none can excel me in prowess and magnanimity,

Neither in India, nor Indus nor Tukhar,
Nor in Kabul can any one compete with me.
I conquered the peaks of Zarang,
And condemned the enemies to their graves,
I have brought honour to the name of my ancestors.
No one can be my rival in the whole world ;
My mighty name echoes in the high mountains and from the lofty peaks."

Pushto literature is mostly in the form of verses, learned by rote and transmitted from generation to generation. It attained great importance towards the beginning of the sixteenth century, and since then has held its influence on the minds of the Afghans (Pushtoons), for it embodies the true spirit of Afghan nationhood and honour "Pushtunwali" as it is called. These verses, communicated from generation to generation and learned by heart both by the educated and by the illiterate, have made Pushto literature a living force even to this day. These verses are characterized by great simplicity and directness, and make up in spirited language what they may lack in imagination. The theme of most of these poems is war, chivalry, bravery, patriotism, honour and love. In the following verses a mother sings to her children about the fight in which their father (and her husband) fell fighting, along with his three brave brothers and five cousins :

"It was a cursed day bleak and cold,
It was the last day of spring,
When Hakim Khan and heroes bold
Conquered the fort of the Alizai king.
A messenger came
And rushed through the tribe,
From village to village,
From house to house,
And called to fight
And glory and death
To the men and youths of Malazais.



*H. E. Sayid Gulpacha Ulfat*

*President of the Tribal Department*

*Ulfat is undoubtedly one of the greatest Pushto poets of his age. His style is simple but impressive and his poems are full of sublime thoughts and patriotic feelings. His poetry is not divorced from life ; rather it reflects its variegated hues and thereby establishes standard for subsequent writers. He evaluates old literature in the light of social consciousness and purposeful activity. Like Khushal Khan Khattak, he too, bewails the backwardness of his people, but unlike him, he is not to fight for the independence of his motherland, but his struggle is against ignorance and superstition. By his peoms, Ulfat wants to infuse a new life into his countrymen and make them fully aware of fresh responsibilities in a world of science and technique.*

And Hakim Khan
Sat on his horse
And said, "O sons
Of heroes past
That day of weighing manliness,
That day has come at last.
That day that you
Must prove that you
Are born of fire and truth.
That day that you
Must give your blood
And dreams and life
And youth."

An Afghan girl encourages her lover thus :

"I would rather see you shot with a bullet rather
Than hear the news of your cowardice on the battle-field.

My love has set an example of bravery,

This is why I have become the object of envy of all the girls."

Khushal Khan Khattak may safely be called the true representative of the Afghan spirit. Though nearly three hundred years have passed since this soldier-poet, the Father of Pushto, sang his songs, yet his stirring verses, fiery speeches and noble examples still inspire his countrymen.

Khushal was born in June, 1613, at a village called Serai, not far from Peshawar. His father, Shahbaz Khan, was a noble of the Khattak tribe. Little is known of Khushal's early life and boyhood. At that time the Mughals were at the zenith of their power and were holding a part of Afghanistan. But in their bid to extend their frontiers and influence in this part of the country, they met stiff resistance at the hands of this freedom-loving people. Khushal, who had been elected chief of his tribe after the death of his father, was always in the forefront of this struggle, a fight which he boldly continued until his death in 1691.

It was Shah Jahan, the Mughal Emperor, who in 1641 appointed Khushal as Chief of the Khattaks and the guardian of the king's highway, linking Delhi with Kabul. Later on Khushal Khan was invited to Delhi, were he was treated with every mark of respect and consideration both by the Emperor and by his courtiers. There at the Mughal court, the soldier-poet became attached to Amanat Khan and Arsala Khan, two of the distinguished nobles, and in their train took active part in various campaigns in Kangra, Balkh and Badakhshan, where by his valour he won considerable fame.

When Aurangzeb came to power, he reversed the temporizing policy of his father in relation to the Afghan border tribes, and thus made a bitter enemy of Khushal Khan Khattak. In 1661, Mahabat Khan, the Governor of the province, was transferred to the Deccan and replaced by Sayid Amin. Three years later, Khushal Khan was summoned to Peshawar by the newly-appointed governor and dispatched in chains, under a strong escort to Delhi, from where he was sent forward to spend over two years in the Gwaliar fortress as a state prisoner. Even after his release he remained under house-arrest, and was not permitted to return to his motherland.

A few years later, when Mahabat Khan arrived in the north once more, Khushal was set at liberty and allowed to return to his homeland. In 1670, Mahabat Khan once again retired and was replaced by Amin Khan, son of Mir Jumla, a diamond merchant of the Deccan. Being arrogant and dissolute the new governor made up his mind to crush the free spirit of the Afghans and their national movement by force of arms. It was not long before he repented of his rash action.

In 1672, the Afridis rose under their leader, Akmal Khan, a born general, who crowned himself king, struck coins in his name and proclaimed a religious war against the Mughals. He invited all the Afghan tribes to his standard and inspired them to join the national movement and take part in the war of liberation. Thousands came to his help from all parts of the country. Closing the Khyber, they attacked the Mughal garrison at Ali Masjid.

Amin Khan, the Mughal governor of Kabul, went out with all the forces at his command to rescue the besieged. After a whole day's fighting, the imperial forces were routed with immense slaughter, everything being lost, troop and treasures amounting to 20,000,000 rupees, elephants and families, including Amin's own wife and daughters and those of the nobles serving under him. Amin himself escaped and reached Peshawar by a secret route over the shoulder of the Tahtana mountain. Later, some of the captives were ransomed, but the governor's wife, for obvious reasons, refused to return and became a recluse.

After this humiliating defeat, Mahabat Khan came up for the third time, and sought to prevail upon Khushal to return to his allegiance, but the latter wrote boldly that he had had enough of the Mughals and their ways, and went into active opposition. His attitude was further stiffened when in 1674 Aurangzeb himself came to north as far as Hassanabdal to pacify the Afghans by force, for the Khyber disaster had been followed by further serious reverses to the Mughal arms. In all these actions, and in a later successful assault on the fort of Nowshera, Khushal took an active part, aided by the Afridi chiefs, Amal Khan and Darya Khan. He also, in protest, resigned the chieftainship of his tribe, and the rest of his life was devoted to the national cause in forays against the Mughals, journeys into various areas to seek assistance and quarrels with his own men, who had turned against him and had taken sides with the Mughals. In his poems he often gives vent to his indignation against these traitors, who had been seduced by the prospect of advancement to give up the cause of their country and to join the ranks of the enemy. He bewails the failure of most of the Afghan tribes to join the national rising he had led against the Mughal Emperor—Aurangzeb. He had a personal feud with the Yusufzais and he was inclined to dismiss them as hopeless. He addresses them in one of his poems, reminding them of *nang* (national honour):

> I, only I, care for my nation's honour,
>
> The Yusufzais are at ease tilling their fields,
>
> Afridis, Mohmands, Shinwaris, what are they about?

See the Mughal host lies in Nangrahar.
The true Pushtuns, everyone from Kandahar to Attock,
Should stand openly or in secret in the cause of honour".

Khushal's life story is an epic of wars and struggles against the Mughals. His poems are the true expression of the national spirit and the circumstances of his adventurous life. He dedicated the whole of his life and energy to this national cause, teaching his countrymen to live free like a lion, rather than submit and lead a life of ease and luxury. He says :

"The dust of my motherland is better than musk,
Its water is sweeter than nectar."

Like a true and patriotic Afghan, during his imprisonment in the Gwaliar fort, he pines to be in his nativeland :

"O gentle morning breeze, shouldst thou pass by Khair-abad,
Or should thy way lead thee beside Serai's stream,
Whisper to them my greetings again and yet again,
Salute them whom I love so dearly.
To the mighty Abaseen cry out with a loud voice,
But whisper softly to the Landai stream.
It may hap that I shall again drink from thee,
And not forever dwell beside Ganga and Jumna.
In Hind are no cool waters for refreshment,
God's curse upon it, though it be full of luxury ;
God grant that I may be once again with my beloved,
Nor for ever will Khushal remain in Hind."

In one of his poems he refers to his forays against the Mughals in these words :

"Like the hawk has been my flight upon the mountains
And many a plump partridge has been my prey ;
The hawk, young and old, seeks its quarry
But the swoop of old hawk errs not."

Khushal wrote many love lyrics. One of his poems runs thus :

"Two things do I love most in myself and in the world,
In myself, mine eyes, and in the world fair women.

When I behold the beauty of the fair one, I feel I have
found God,
Love's affairs are like fire, O Khushal;
What, though the flames be hidden, the smoke is seen."

In another of his poems he describes the physical charms of the Afridi girls in these words:

"Fair and rosy are the Adamkhel maidens,
Large eyes they have, long ashes, and arched eyebrow,
Sugar lips, flowered cheeks, a face like the moon.
Tiny are the mouths like pouting rose buds,
Their skin so soft, and glossy like an egg shell,
In stature straight as the letter Alif and fair of colour."

His words still kindle fire in the hearts of his compatriots. He is still looked upon as one of the greatest leaders and as the father of the Afghan poets. This poet desired to be buried in a lonely spot away from the clatter of the hoofs of the imperial cavalry passing the highway. He loved the countryside and especially the flowers and natural scenery of his native village, near Acora, where his resting place is still to be seen, covered with a marble slab, bearing the following inscription in Pushto:

"I have taken up the sword to defend the pride of the
Afghan,
I am Khushal Khattak, the honourable man of the age."

CHAPTER XXVI

# THE NATIONAL DYNASTIES

## The Hotakis

Kandahar was the first of the Afghan provinces to be liberated from foreign influence. Mir Wais Khan, the popular Hotaki Chief and Kalantar (mayor) of Kandahar, putting himself at the head of a national rising, killed Gurgin, the Persian governor of the province and declared his independence (1708 A. D.), Persia, with vast resources at its command, was not prepared to brook this defeat. Expeditions were sent one after the other to bring Kandahar once again within the fold of the Persian Empire. All meeting disaster, the Persians were at last forced to admit their defeat and leave Kandahar to be the master of its own destiny.

Mir Wais ruled his people wisely until his death in 1715. He did not assume the title of king and was content to be called a Mushar (chief) of his people. He left behind two minor sons, Mir Mahmud and Mir Hussain, who, on account of their tender age, were not considered competent enough to rule. The responsibility, therefore, fell on Abdul Aziz, the brother of the deceased Khan, a man of feeble nature, who thought that it was not possible for Kandahar to hold its own against the two powerful neighbours. He decided to side with Persia in order to be immune from the threats of the Mughals. Mir Mahmud, though quite young (for he was hardly eighteen) could not see the efforts of his father being cast to winds. With the active co-operation of some of the loyal followers of Mir Wais, he entered the royal palace, killed his uncle with his own hands, and ascending the throne, took the title of King (1716).

At the same time the Abdalis of Herat, encouraged by the example of Kandahar, rose in arms against the Persian garrison. After killing the governor and routing the Persian army, they declared their independence. Once more the effete Saffavids could not force their will on a brave people and had to admit their defeat. Thus two of the important Afghan provinces won their independence practically at the same time. Had they joined hands and made a united effort to liberate the rest of their motherland from foreign domination, their success would have been an established fact. But being jealous of the growing power of each other, they came into an armed conflict at Farah, in which Assadullah, the young leader of the Abdalis, was killed.

Mir Mahmud was not content with the possession of Kandahar. Being young and ambitious, he wanted to be a great king and to revive the traditions of his ancestors. But he committed a mistake, one of a very serious nature. Instead of consolidating his position at home and liberating Afganistan from Mughal domination, he made up his mind to conquer Iran and thereby satiate his pent-up grievances. He had no difficulty in executing his plan. With a handful of men, he plunged right into the heart of Persia. The degenerate Persian Government could offer no effective resistance. The Battle of Gulnabad (March 1722), a few miles outside Isfahan, the Persian capital, practically sealed the fate of the Saffavid Empire, and the whole of Iran lay at the feet of the victor.

Again, a serious mistake was made. Instead of ruling Iran from his base at Kandahar, Mahmud decided to shift his capital to Isfahan, in the midst of an alien people. This indeed was the beginning of a series of difficulties which the Afghans had to face in Iran. The Afghans, who had better experience in military art, left the entire administration of the country in the hands of the Persians. With a handful of men and cut off from their motherland by hundreds of miles, they could get no adequate help from their brethren in the event of a misfortune. At the same time, with their meagre resources in men and material, they had to crush internal risings on the one hand

and fight two of the most powerful empires—the Ottoman and Russian on the other. But what made their position all the more untenable were the dissensions of the Afghan chiefs themselves, who were not prepared to co-operate with the central government. Each of these refractory chiefs wanted to establish an independent principality in a different part of the country and to rule as he wished. The Persians took full advantage of these jealousies and rivalries. The result was disastrous to the Afghans, both in Iran and in Afghanistan. Nadir a brigand-chief, putting himself at the head of a national movement, was able, in the first instance, to crush the Afghan power in Iran.* Then, turning to Afghanistan itself, he took Herat, Kandahar and Kabul. In 1739, emerging from Afghanistan, he marched on Delhi at the head of a large force, mostly recruited from among the Afghans themselves. Defeating the Mughal forces at Karnal, not far from the fatal field of Panipat, he entered the Mughal capital triumphantly on March 12, 1739.

After a stay of two months, Nadir took possession of the imperial treasures and jewels, including the famous Peacock Throne, the aggregate value of which is estimated at 700,000,000 rupees. He then rode back through the desolate streets of Delhi on his way to Persia. On reaching Meshad, he decided to make it the capital of his far-flung empire. But he was not destined to live long enough to reap the fruits of his labour. In 1747, as a result of a conspiracy in his own army, he was killed in his camp near Khabushan, and with his death his vast empire broke into pieces.

*Mahmud died in 1725, and was succeeded by his cousin, Ashraf. Young and energetic, he was able to stop the Russian advance at Darband. Then turning west he defeated the Turks. But on October 2, 1719, his forces were routed by Nadir at Damaghan. This battle sealed the fate of Afghans rule in Persia.

# The Rise of the Durranis

## Ahmad Shah

After the assassination of Nadir Shah in 1747, his vast empire began to splinter. The Afghan contingent, headed by Mir Afghan Noor Mohammed Ghilzai and Ahmad Khan Abdali, returned home. On reaching Kandahar, a tribal Jirga was held at the shrine of Sher-i-Surkh (Red Lion) to consider the future of the country. The chief question was as to who should be elected king. Among the aspirants were many elderly chieftains of great power and influence. The Jirga met eight times without making any choice. On the ninth day so heated did the discussion and arguments become that recourse to arms seemed inevitable. Seeing this, Sabar Shah, a respectable divine, whom all tribes revered, proposed the name of young Ahmad Khan, who was hardly twenty-five and who had kept quiet during the whole of the session. The proposal was warmly applauded and unanimously accepted. The coronation had none of the usual pomp and show. The Dervish went out, and collected a few sheaves of wheat and knitting them into a crown, he placed it on the head of Ahmad Khan, king-elect, pronouncing, "May this serve you as a crown." Seeing this, all the contending chiefs came forward to pay homage to him. Young Ahmad Shah, the future king of Afghanistan, raised by his own people to the highest honour and dignity, was soon to prove himself most worthy of this trust.

The first aim of Ahmad Shah was to win the affection and confidence of his people, and by bringing them together, to weld the warring and restless tribes into a strong Afghan nation. His second object was to free his people from the yoke of foreign domination and to consolidate the scattered Afghan lands into one compact political unit. The execution of these plans necessitated his waging a series of wars, both offensive and defensive, which he carried out with the skill of a consummate general.

Ahmad Shah's military achievements, though worthy of every praise, fall beyond the scope of this book. That he was one of the best generals of his time and had no less than a dozen successful campaigns to his credit, no one can deny. He exalted the spirit and stature of his people by winning one of the decisive battles in history, the Third Battle of Panipat (1761), which saved the Mughal Empire from immediate and ignominious extinction, and which changed the whole course of Indian history. He was entreated to accept the throne of Delhi. He could have easily assumed the title of the Emperor of India and restored its ancient power and glory, had he decided to make India his permanent home. But Ahmad Shah was too patriotic to accept this offer, to him his own realm was enough.

Ahmad Shah was a great king, a consummate general and an able administrator. He was simple in dress and food. He never wore a crown, a string of jewels, nor sat on a throne. His simple and modest demeanour made him the idol of his people. He was easy of access to the meanest of his subjects, and administered justice equitably. Though an all-powerful king, he disdained the pomp and show of the oriental durbars. He abolished the custom of Kurnish, which means kissing the floor or even the feet of the monarch.

He was popular with all sections of his people. He wished to see the Afghans flourish and grow in strength. Many stories are related to show his love and sympathy for his people. It is said that when he heard of the death of one of his followers in a battle, the King, accompanied by his Sardars and nobles, called at the house of the deceased to offer condolence to his widow. On another occasion, when he was returning home and camping at a distance from Kandahar, a soldier escaped stealthily to his village nearby. His wife, Aino, rebuking him, sent him back to the camp, saying that it did not become a loyal soldier to haste to his family when Ahmad Shah Baba was still away from his own. On his return to the camp, the man was arrested for having left without leave. When Ahmad Shah came to know the whole story, he admired the spirit of the

woman and granted her in perpetuity a Karez (underground stream), which is still known as Aino's Karez.

All historians, foreign as well as Afghan, concur that Ahmad Shah possessed many manly qualities. He was inferior to none in lineage and superior to all in personal qualities, personality combined with organizing ability, valour with cool-headedness, firmness with clemency and dignity with urbanity. "Ahmad Shah's genius", according to Dr. Ganda Singh, "found full expression in his military exploits. He combined with his soldier's career some great human qualities. A born soldier, the great Afghan was a natural leader of men, a humane ruler, an able administrator, and a great patron of learning and literature.........Hardy and enterprising by nature, he presented an ideal picture of Afghan manhood . . . . He possessed a towering and magnetic personality, and there was something remarkable in his luminous face and demeanour that won him the admiration and affection of all. A prodigy from boyhood, he had attracted the notice of Nadir Shah, who always kept him on his personal staff and showered on him the highest praises. "I have not seen in Iran, Turan and Hindustan any man", said Nadir in an open court, "of such laudable talents as possessed by Ahmad Khan." And the words of Nadir turned out to be prophetically true." Again to the same writer, "He was ever true to his word and he could always be relied upon for the fulfilment of his promises. His forbearance and clemency towards the descendants of Nadir Shah showed his generosity and spirit of loyalty."*

An English historian's estimate is more specific and bears reproduction. In his "An Account of the Kingdom of Caboul," Mountstuart Elphinstone says :

> "His (Ahmad Shah's) military courage and activity are spoken of with admiration both by his people and the nations with whom he was engaged either in war or alliances. He seems to be naturally disposed to mildness and clemency and, though it is impossible to acquire

*Ahmad Shah Durrani, by Dr. Ganda Singh, pp. 328-29.

sovereign power and perhaps in Asia to maintain it, without crimes, yet the memory of no Eastern Prince is stained with fewer acts of cruelty and injustice. If ever an Asiatic king deserved the gratitude of his country, it was Ahmad Shah, the Pearl of Durranis. In his character, he seems to have been cheerful, affable and good-natured. He maintained considerable dignity on State occasions, but at other times his manners were plain and familiar. He was himself a divine and an author, and was always ambitious of a character of a saint."

"Ahmad Shah", according to Dr. Ganda Singh, "raised the status of women. He abolished the inequitable practice of divorce, which gave men immense advantage over women. He strongly advocated the remarriage of widows ......He was not greedy, and freely distributed among his men what he could get from any source. He looked upon them as partners in his gains."

Ahmad Shah was a great patron of men of letters, masons and wood-carvers. Though he had very little leisure for the pursuit of knowledge and useful arts, whatever time he had between any two military operations was spent in extending patronage to poets and writers. He invited to his court at Kandahar Waqif of Batala and Nizamuddin Ishrat of Sialkot, two famous Indian poets of the time. He himself was not only literate but well-versed in the national languages of the country. He had a fairly good taste in poetry. That Ahmad Shah could find time and peace of mind to compose a sizeable Diwan, in a life of crowded military and political pre-occupations is not surprising. He had no other peacetime hobby. He was not fond of hunting or of any other sport. Only once did he attend a singing party.

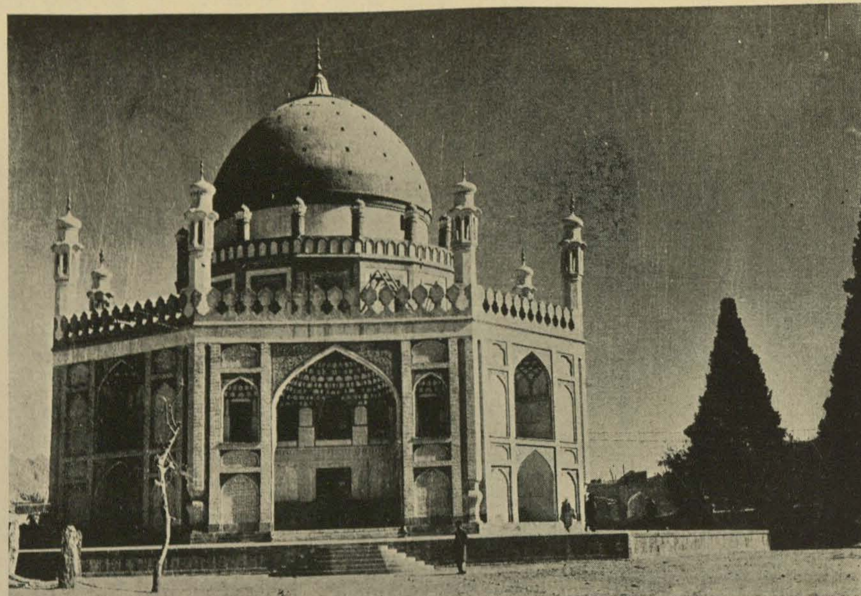
His Pushto poetry bears an unmistakable stamp of his simplicity, sincerity, faith and patriotism. The bulk of the Diwan consists of love poems; but he reveals his true self when he speaks

of virtue, ambition, struggle, sacrifice and love of country. Here are a few specimens :

"I care not whether one is Ghilji or an Abdali,
He alone is good who possesses a clean heart,
He alone succeeds who practises virtue,
No matter if he wears rough and thick clothes.
"To me the sea is the same as land
And the mountain as plain,
I will conquer them all with my own effort.
Ahmad there can be no happiness without struggle,
Everywhere struggle triumphs.
"O Ahmad Shah, in this world's market
The most precious thing is self-sacrifice.
The death of an honourable man is no death,
That of a dishonourable man is very painful indeed ;
I will lose my life but never my honour.
Death is better than treachery ;
A traitor must not be allowed to live,
He must be slain with sword.
"I will conquer countless lands
And revive the memory of Sher Shah ;
But I cannot forget the fascinating orchards of my motherland.
When I think of the mountain peaks of my country,
I forget the throne of Delhi."

Ahmad Shah also displayed keen interest in the construction of towns and buildings. After the victory of Panipat, he laid the foundation of a new city in Kandahar, called after him the City of Ahmad Shah. But the finest edifices of his time were the memorial raised to preserve the sacred garment of the Holy Prophet (Khirqa-i-Mubaraka), and the fine dome which was to serve as his resting place after his death.

And finally, no life sketch of Ahmad Shah can be complete without a mention of his high-souled mother, Zargona Anna, who largely shaped his character and lent to it a higher tone even when he was a king. It is related that Ahmad Shah wanted



*The Tomb of Ahmad Shah Durrani (1747—1773), the founder of Modern Afghanistan and the Victor of the Third Battle of Panipat.*

to dig a deep ditch around his new city of Kandahar. Zarghona, learning of it, sent a reproving message to her son, saying: "It does not become of you to build a moat, because you thereby betray the fear that the enemy might come as far as your capital." During a campaign in India, it was falsely rumoured that Ahmad Shah was defeated by the Marahattas and was in flight. When the rumour reached Zarghona, she shouted proudly, "Impossible, Ahmad would die rather than turn his back."

The long and restless exertions told very heavily on his health towards the closing years of his life, and he passed away at Toba, near Kandahar, in 1773, after a reign of twenty-six years.

"But the Shah", writes Dr. Ganda Singh, "accomplished the greatest of great things in making the Afghans a nation and giving them an independent homeland. He is known to the world more as Baba-i-Afghan, father of the Afghan nation, and the maker of modern Afghanistan than anything else.

"An Afghan first, an Afghan last and an Afghan throughout, he spent the whole of his active life for the glorification of his country. Although he passed away from the scene of his earthly activities one hundred and eighty-five years ago, he still lives in the heart of every Afghan, young or old, who worships his memory as a great conquerer, a true and noble leader of men and the father of the united and independent Afghanistan and loves to call him Ahmad Shah Baba".*

**Timur Shah**

Ahmad Shah, dying in 1773, was succeeded by his son Timur, who was not even the shadow of his illustrious father. As soon as the grip of the master hand was felt no more, numerous sources of danger cropped up within and from outside the country. Timur was incapable of dealing courageously with all these difficulties, the result being that the feudal lords paid him but nominal homage, and the greater part of his reign was spent in quelling these uprisings. His shifting and vacillating

*Ahmad Shah Durrani, by Dr. Ganda Singh, p. 346.

policies and easy-going temperament brought immense loss to the kingdom founded by Ahmad Shah, and its real disintegration begins with Timur's reign. It was Timur who, realizing the general hatred of the people of Kandahar towards him, decided to shift his capital to Kabul and recruited a strong force of Kizilbashes to serve him as bodyguard.

**Zaman Shah**

After the death of Timur in 1793, his fifth son, Zaman, was able to occupy the throne with the help of Sardar Payenda Khan, the influential chief of the Barakzais. Shah Zaman from the very beginning of his reign was beset with innumerable difficulties, both external and internal. His elder brothers, Humayun and Mahmud, Governors of Kandahar and Herat respectively, took up arms to contest him for power. In the beginning Shah Zaman had the upper hand ; Humayun was defeated and deprived of his eyesight, while Mahmud had to take refuge in Persia.

Shah Zaman then turned to India with the object of repeating the exploits of his grandfather. This greatly alarmed the British, who had not yet fully consolidated their position in India. They took prompt measures for the security of their Indian possessions now threatened by Napoleon of France on one side and Shah Zaman on the other. Captain John Malcolm was accordingly deputed as Envoy to Persia to induce Fateh Ali Kajar to bring pressure upon the Afghan King and to divert his attention from the threatened invasion of India. The Shah went a step further. He helped Mahmud, the ex-governor of Herat, who had taken asylum in Persia, with men and money and encouraged him to advance on Kandahar. Mahmud, assisted by the Shah and Wazir Fateh Khan, the eldest son of Sardar Payenda Khan, took Kandahar after a siege of forty-two days. Emboldened by his initial success, he then pushed on towards Kabul.

Zaman was at this time in India and had proceeded as far as Lahore with the intention of executing his ambitious plan. Learning of Mahmud's activities in Kandahar, he hurried back

to Afghanistan to retrieve his losses. But owing to treachery in his own ranks, his cause became almost hopeless. Leaving Kabul precipitately he journeyed to Peshawar with only a handful of followers. Near Jigdalik he decided to pass the night at the fort of Ashiq Khan, one of his old adherents. This Ashiq turned out to be a traiter. Detaining his royal guest, he sent a swift messenger to Kabul, informing Mahmud of the Shah's confinement. Assad Khan, a brother of the Wazir, was immediately despatched to secure Shah Zaman and his party. The King's eyes were pierced with a lancet. Taken to Kabul, he was imprisoned at the Bala Hissar, where he remained until the end of Mahmud's reign (1803).

**Shah Mahmud**

The new King was incapable, selfish and indolent. He took no interest in the welfare of his people; rathered he squandered the treasures accumulated by his father and grandfather on his personal pleasures, and left the entire affairs of the State in the hands of his powerful and resourceful Wazir, Fateh Khan. The Minister, too, had a rival in the person of Akram Khan Alizai. The rivalries and jealousies of these two influential chiefs caused unrest throughout the country. There were revolts and riots on all sides and the King's army could not cope with the situation. Shah Shuja, a full brother of Shah Zaman, taking advantage of the situation, rode into the capital triumphantly. Mahmud, finding that all was over, sued for peace. His life and eyes were spared, but he was taken to the Bala Hissar and cast into prison.

**Shah Shuja**

Shuja, who ascended the throne in 1803, was unable to restore peace and prosperity in a country torn by internal dissensions and discord. The chiefs all around had become too powerful and unruly, and the outlying provinces were trying to assert their independence. The Sikhs of the Punjab were encroaching upon the Afghan territories from the east, while the Persians were threatening from the west. The Shah, in spite of his best efforts, could not reconcile the powerful Barakzai

chief, Fateh Khan. This caused the general condition of the country, already on the verge of bankruptcy and ruin, to deteriorate still further.

Napoleon of France was at this time at the zenith of his power. In 1807, he and Alexander I of Russia signed the Treaty of Tilsit. After a brief but bloody war, the two potentates embraced each other like brothers and in an atmosphere of complete cordiality, they decided upon a combined invasion of India. This once more aroused the British to action in order to recover their lost prestige at the Persian Court. They also planned to protect their Indian Empire against any foreign aggression by binding the western frontier states in a chain of friendly alliances. A mission, headed by Elphinstone, was sent to meet the Shah at Peshawar for the purpose of discussing ways and means of mutual defence against the threatened invasion of India via Afghanistan. The mission was warmly received by the Shah and the negotiations resulted in the conclusion of a treaty of friendship (June 7, 1809). But the Shah's fortune was then at a low ebb. Hardly had the Mission left Peshawar, when news was received that Kabul had been occupied by Mahmud with the help of the Wazir, Fateh Khan. The month of June had not come to a close before it was evident that the Shah's cause was almost hopeless. After a short encounter near Gandomak, Shah Shuja's forces were routed, while he, turning off, withdrew beyond the border to await a favourable opportunity (1809).

Shah Shuja, after making some futile efforts to recover his throne, was at last imprisoned and carried off to Kashmir. In 1812, however, he was able to make good his escape. He came to Lahore, hoping to get the help of Ranjit Singh, ruler of the Punjab, in regaining his lost throne. Contrary to his expectations, the Sikh ruler treated him most discourteously and robbed him of the famous diamond, the Koh-i-Noor. The fugitive monarch, after various vicissitudes, finally found an asylum under the British at Ludhiana.

The Barakzais were now dominant throughout Afghanistan. This incited the jealousy of Prince Kamran, Shah Mahmud's

eldest son. Availing himself of an opportunity at Herat, he caught hold of the Wazir, the eldest of the Barakzai brothers, and deprived him of his eyesight.

Retribution immediately followed this outrage. The Wazir's brothers, twenty-one in number, took up arms in every direction. The Shah asked the Wazir to write to his brothers to submit. He replied boldly that he was blind and had no control over them. Irritated and enraged by his bold answer, the Shah ordered the unfortunate minister, to whom he twice owed his crown, to be cut to pieces. He made no cry and offered no prayer for mercy, and died as he had lived, boldly, dauntlessly and resolutely. The end of the Wazir was indeed the death-knell of the Durrani dynasty (1818).

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CHAPTER XXVII

# DECADENCE AND RENAISSANCE

The nineteenth century had scarcely dawned when Afghanistan found herself confronted with innumerable difficulties both from within and without. The internecine war, that followed immediately after the collapse of the Durrani dynasty, lasted with unabated fury for more than a quarter of a century, crippling the resources of the country and making it an easy prey to foreign aggression and intrigues.

At the death of Timur Shah, towards the close of the eighteenth century, a great struggle for power ensued, first among the grandsons of Ahmad Shah Durrani, then among the Durranis and the Barakzais (or Mohammedzais), and finally among the numerous sons of Sardar Payenda Khan, the influential chief of the last named tribe. As a result of these feuds among the contending parties, Afghanistan suffered heavily; her resources were sapped and her prestige was gone. The vast empire built by Ahmad Shah the Great, extending from Meshad to the Satluj and from Kashmir to the Arabian Sea, was crumbling brick by brick, and the process of dismemberment continued until the close of the nineteenth century.

Afghanistan had hardly recovered from these fraticidal wars when new dangers of a very serious nature appeared on the scene, which for a time threatened her very existence. She found herself at one and the same time confronted with two powerful imperialistic European powers. England was tugging hard to cross the Satluj, occupy the Punjab, then held by the Sikhs, and push her way westward on to the Afghan soil; while Tsarist Russia slowly and steadily was encroaching upon Afghanistan's

northern border. At one time it appeared as if these two rival powers would come to terms and divide the spoils between themselves, wiping Afghanistan off the map. Fortunately, the bold and heroic resistance of the freedom-loving Afghans on the one hand, and the ever-increasing rivalry of Russia and England on the other, frustrated these selfish designs and gave Afghanistan time to breathe freely. Besides, the Sikhs, who were now the masters of the Punjab and the trans-Indus districts, were trying to avail themselves of the opportunity, and were busy pushing their nose in the Khyber Pass; while the Iranians, dreaming of the glorious days of the Saffavids, were hot on the scent of Herat.

The British, who had overrun the greater part of India with incredible swiftness and ease by the beginning of the nineteenth century, were now planning, under the plea of stemming the Russian advance, to push their boundaries right into the heart of Afghanistan. Various fantastic formulas were framed and different policies adopted to achieve the object in view, some even aiming at the complete absorption of Afghanistan into the British Indian Empire. By a coincidence these Anglo-Afghan wars and clashes took place approximately every forty years, leaving behind them destruction, anarchy, chaos and very bitter memories. It was perhaps, because of the preoccupation of the Afghans in defending their motherland against the inroads of Western colonialism that throughout the nineteenth century they could hardly find time to devote themselves to the pursuit of learning. This has been the concern of the Afghans since the French forces occupied Egypt in 1798, which started a keen rivalry between Britain and France in the Middle Eastern countries. One Muslim country after another fell under colonial domination, and all the Eastern countries faced relentless and superior power, which invariably subjugated their people and exploited their wealth. The method by which the policy of empire was executed and resistance was crushed, the way the wealth of the area was tapped, the manner in which the cultures of the conquerors was imposed, all these promoted fears and suspicions. Under

the circumstances it was hardly feasible for the Afghans to give their undivided attention to the study of knowledge and the learning of useful arts.

Throughout the nineteenth century the Afghans had to fight for their very existence. All they could do was to fight the invading forces, who were equipped with the latest weapons. The devastating effect of these wars gave the rulers of Afghanistan little time to devote their attention to the development of the country and the welfare of their people. All that they could do was to nurse the wounds and repair the losses inflicted.

It cannot be denied that the political and social structure of the country itself went a long way in contributing towards its decline, both materially and spiritually. There was no constitution to define the rights of the people or the duties and responsibilities of the ruler, rather they looked upon each other with suspicion and distrust. Lack of co-operation between the rulers and the ruled greatly deteriorated the situation. The government was, on the whole, inefficient and its mechanism of control deplorably defective. It could not maintain peace and administer justice equitably. People, finding their life, property and honour in danger, had to adopt security measures. They naturally rallied round influential chiefs, to whom they promised loyalty, in return for protection. These feudal lords built fortresses all over the country and owed but nominal allegiance to the central government. The result was that in various parts of the country these chiefs were using their power to found virtually independent principalities for themselves and their children. Taking advantage of the chaotic conditions, they would collect taxes for themselves, and would side with the party that would promise them more favours and better terms.

The ruler, with a view to consolidating his power, would contract matrimonial alliances with these feudal lords by marrying their daughters. This policy served for the time being, but after the ruler's death the dire results of polygamy became apparent, involving the country in a bloody civil war. The numerous sons

of the deceased ruler would bid for the throne. Unfortunately, the right of succession to the throne of the eldest son was seldom recognized by these rulers, which naturally deteriorated the situation. Dost Mohammed Khan appointed his third son, Sher Ali, as his successor. His elder sons, Afzal Khan and Azam Khan, thinking that they were unjustly deprived of their rights, revolted against Sher Ali after the death of their father. This war of succession lasted about five years, bringing untold miseries on the country and the people. Similarly, Sher Ali Khan, forgetting the lesson, nominated his younger son, Abadullah Jan, in preference to Yakub Khan and Ayub Khan, with disastrous results as will become apparent.

It was during this period that Afghanistan lost its direct contact with the outside world. Though the British invasions of Afghanistan ended in complete disasters, yet British diplomacy had the upper hand, and ultimately succeeded in converting Afghanistan into a closed basin by occupying the outlying provinces of Sindh and Baluchistan, feudatory to the rulers of Kabul. This policy had far-reaching effect on the material and spiritual growth of the people. It crippled Afghan trade and deprived Afghanistan of all its avenues of progress and enlightenment. The country, having no outlet to the open sea, was forced to send its merchandise to the border towns of the neighbouring countries and dispose them of at prices offered by brokers, middlemen or money-lenders. The rulers, always suspicious of the intrigues of the colonial powers, followed a "closed door" policy; no one was allowed to go out of the country to find out what the world had achieved in the domains of science and culture, nor would they allow foreigners to move freely in the country and to have even cultural contact with the masses. This naturally kept the Afghans ignorant of what was going on in other parts of the world.

The system of education was extremely defficient. It was the memory of the child that was chiefly developed. The young scholar was to absorb learning in its most impersonal form. The teaching took place in the master's house or preferably in the

mosque; the young man seated himself in his place in the circle of pupils who surrounded the master, sitting with his back to a pillar or pillow and squatting on a little platform. A passage from the classical or religious book was read aloud and the master explained it. A few notes were taken; but above all it was the memory that was required to retain the text and the commentaries. The curriculum, which had nothing of modern sciences; was arranged as the teacher thought best.

Secular education, and even arts and crafts, were looked down upon. The masses, being mostly conservative, did not like to change with the changing of time. They were extreme fatalistics who had developed a philosophy of patience and contentment towards suffering. They would rather put up with any kind of trouble-disease, hunger or poverty, than to exert themselves to overcome it. And as we all know, progress in arts and sciences and in social betterment cannot evolve from a state of contentment. To be satisfied with things as they are, with values pursued today, with human society as it is, is to stagnate and decay. It is a mark of disintegration in a personality as well as in a society.

Moreover, "the goodly neighbours", tried by all the means at their disposal to keep the Afghans steeped in ignorance and superstitions. Directly when one of the Afghan rulers started to combat these mental and physical diseases and to make Afghanistan march on the path of progress and prosperity, he found himself faced with innumerable difficulties, most of them being the creation of those, who outwardly spoke of warm friendship and perpetual alliance, but inwardly with all the resources at their command, were bent on arousing public feelings against these reforms.

Another factor that contributed largely to the difficulties of the country and which had a far-reaching influence on Afghan foreign policy, was the presence of one of the Afghan princes in a neighbouring country, who, in furtherance of his selfish motives, was prepared to make any sacrifice. Throughout the nineteenth century these "trump cards" played an important role in the

destiny of Afghanistan. Shah Zaman lost his throne and eyesight simply because he wanted to drive the British out of India. The British prevailed upon the Shah of Persia to keep the Afghan King busy on his western frontier. Mahmud, a step-brother of Zaman, who had taken shelter in Iran, now came forward to play a pawn in the hands of foreigners. Under the "touch of British gold" Zaman's plans were not only frustrated, but he lost his crown and was shut up in the Bala Hissar of Kabul for full three years.

When Dost Mohammed Khan came to power, Shah Shuja, a claimant to the throne then at Ludhian under British protection, was ready to sacrifice Afghanistan's interests for his selfish designs, This involved the country in a war with the British, with dire results to the parties concerned. Later on, when Sher Ali succeeded his father, he, too, had a lot of difficulties at the hands of these "trump cards". His uncle, Azam Khan, had settled in Rawalpindi, waiting for a favourable opportunity to return, while Abdur Rahman, another claimant to the throne, had taken refuge in Tashkent. This naturally affected the foreign relations of Afghanistan with respect to her two powerful neighbours—the British and the Russians.

Similarly, when Abdur Rahman Khan came to power, his formidable rival, Ayub Khan, the Victor of Maiwand, was brought from Persia to India and allowed to settle at Rawalpindi. The British pressure on Afghanistan increased simultaneously, until at last the Amir was forced to sign the Treaty of Durand.

Due to these causes, Afghanistan suffered heavily, and reduced from a far-flung empire to a small kingdom and a closed basin, having lost not only its foreign possessions, but a large tract of its own land as well. These developments have had a tremendous influence on the cultural and commercial development of the country.

This period of a hundred years is extremely deficient in literary figures. The only personality worth mentioning is Sayid Jamal-ud-Din Afghani, one of the greatest leaders of human thought, who, having failed to carry out his programme of

reforms in his motherland, went abroad and played an important part in the awakening of the Middle East countries. So, before discussing the political development of the country in this period, it would not be out of place to know who this great personality was, what he aimed at, and how far he influenced Muslim thought and was successful in arousing the nations of the East against Western colonialism.

**Sayid Jamal-ud-Din Afghani.**
*Politician, Reformer, Journalist and Orator.*

The nineteenth century was one of the most difficult periods of Muslim history. The Ottoman Empire, once the dread of Europe, was being disrupted. At one time it seemed as if Russia and Austria, her two nearest neighbours, or Russia and England would come to terms and divide the possessions of the "Sick Man" of Europe between themselves. But this was not the only danger that threatened this vast empire at this juncture. There was another menace, and of a more serious nature. This immediate danger was not from without but from within the Sultan's dominions. The Turkish government at this time was extremely inefficient and its mechanism deplorably defective. Due to this, a process of dismemberment was going on within the country such as had gone on in Germany during the Middle Ages under the feudal system.

Persia, Turkey's next-door neighbour, was not in a better position. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century it had become a bone of contention between England, Russia and Napoleon. Some of her richest provinces, such as Geogria, Mingrelia, Daghistan, Shirwan, Karabagh and Talish were successfully severed from her, and she was to sign the humiliating treaty of Gulistan in 1813.

In India the British had by this time overrun the greater part of the country and had reached the Satluj. They were now busy planning to annex the Punjab then held by the Sikhs. At the same time British gold and intrigues found their way into most of the Middle Eastern countries and went a long way in bringing about the downfall of Shah Zaman.

In all the Muslim countries the Western invasions and penetrations had far-reaching effects, both in the field of politics and of religion. The political weakness of the Muslims was explained by the *Ulama* as the consequence of loss of belief in the tenets of Islam and in corruption of practice; while the younger generation, imbued with modern education and dazzled with European progress in various fields, were under the impression that the rigidity of Islam was chiefly responsible for their backwardness. The younger people were in favour of change and thought it necessary to adapt Muslim institutions and practices to meet the changing conditions of the world.

The *Ulama*, no doubt, had always been a source of great strength to Islam. But during the course of centuries and especially after the destruction of Bagdad by the Mongolian hordes, they became extremely conservative, fatalistic and pessimistic and would not allow any freedom of judgment or adaptation. The masses of Islam were swayed by the kind of mysticism which blinked actualities, enervated the people and kept them steeped in all kinds of superstition. From its high state as a source of spiritual education and inspiration, mysticism had fallen to the mere means of exploiting the ignorance and the credulity of the people. It gradually and invisibly unnerved the will of Islam and softened it to the extent of seeking relief from the rigorous discipline as dictated by the *Shara*—Muslim law.

It was on Afghan soil that the first general reform movement on a dual character took place. On the religious side, the movement called for the purification of religious belief and practice, and for raising the intellectual standard, including the extention and the modernization of education. On the political side, it aimed at raising the standard of living, removing the causes of division between the Muslims and uniting them in defence of the Faith. Strange it is that the protagonist of these two very important movements was an Afghan, Sayid Jamal-ud Din by name, who had never been to a school on modern lines. Moved by the moral and material chaos of Muslims all over the world, he rose in revolt against the rigidity of the *Ulama* and called

Muslims to the broad daylight of the modern world. His mission was to open the eyes of Muslims to the spirit of Islam, which aimed at the conquest of matter and not at flight from it. His untiring campaigns throughout the Muslim world had far-reaching results, which profoundly stirred Muslim thought and helped to awaken the East against European imperialism. At the same time his efforts and views contributed to a large extent to the Arab rising, to the Persian revolution and to the revolt of the "Young Turks" against Sultan Abdul Hamid's despotism.

Sayid Jamal-ud Din Afghani was born in Afghanistan in the year 1839, at a place called Assadabad, in the Kunar valley, not far from the modern city of Jalalabad. His father, Sayid Safdar, was an eminent scholar and a man of great influence. Up to the coming of Amir Dost Mohammed Khan to power, he was the independent ruler of his principality. The Amir had removed him to Kabul. At this time Sayid Jamal-ud Din was hardly eight years old. He was one of the Afghans who went to a mosque, squatted on the floor in the presence of a Mulla and learned his lessons by rote.

He studied theology, jurisprudence, rhetoric, philosophy, metaphysics, astronomy, mathematics, geometry, medicine and Arabic. One of his tutors was Sayid Mahir bin Ali, a man of no mean reputation. Sayid Jamal-ud Din was an intelligent student and from the very beginning made great progress and was able to speak Arabic fluently. In 1856, when the Sayid was no more than eighteen years old, his family was allowed to return to their home in Kunar.

A few days later Jamal-ud Din lost his father. It was a shock that so unhinged his tender mind that he decided to bid farewell to his nativeland and go to Mecca on a pilgrimage. On his way to Arabia, he stayed in India for a year and a half. This time, in India, was utilized in learning English, which stood him in good stead in his later life. At Mecca the Sayid had the opportunity of meeting the Muslim leaders from all over the world and of discussing with them some of the important problems which had led to the general degradation of the Muslim

world. With the collaboration of some of them he laid the foundation of a society, Ommul Qora, whose aim was to fight imperialism and to adapt Islam to the rapidly changing conditions of the world.

Returning to his homeland in 1861, the Sayid met Amir Dost Mohammed Khan at Jalalabad. The Amir, being very much impressed by the Sayid's vast knowledge, made him one of his chief counsellors. After Dost Mohammed's death in 1863, when Sher Ali Khan, his third son, came to power, the Sayid was appointed as Privy Councillor and was made responsible for the drafting of a comprehensive programme in connection with the development of the country. But Sher Ali from the outset was beset with innumerable difficulties. The Sayid, being disgusted with what was going on in his motherland, decided once more to leave Afghanistan. He went to India, but the British, aware of his anti-colonial sentiments, would not allow him to stay there for very long. His controversies with some of the Indian leaders, including Sir Sayid Ahmad Khan, the founder of the Muslim College at Aligarh, and his activities in political fields soon made Jamal-ud Din a *persona non grata.*

The Sayid went to Egypt, then in the throes of a great crisis. He was very much upset with the general degradation of the Egyptians and set his mind to launch his programme of reforms. This brought him into conflict with the *Ulama.* A large number of them rose against him, and, seeing their influence at a low ebb, called him a renegade, a rebel against Islam. The political clique, afraid of the growing influence of the Sayid, joined hands with the *Ulama* and forced Jamal-ud Din to leave the country.

The Sayid wanted to go to Hejaz, but at the invitation of the Porte, proceeded to Constantinople (now Intanbul). The Caliph and his ministers received the Sayid with every mark of respect. This aroused the jealousy of Hassan Fahimi Effendi, Sheikh-ul-Islam, who, finding his influence fastly declining, excommunicated him. The Sayid had no choice but to leave the country. Thus began his sojourns to Iran, Russia, France and England.



*Ibn-i-Sinna Street, Kabul.*

Nasir-ud Din, the Shah of Persia, at first treated him with every mark of respect. But gradually their relations became strained. The Shah would not listen to his counsels and would say, "You have nothing but complaints and criticisms of my government. Like a dove you are cooking all the time."

At Paris, the Sayid started an Arabic paper "Qurwatul Wusqa" with the co-operation of his Egyptian friend and student, Sheikh Abdhu. It was here that he had discussions with some of the prominent French and English scholars on religion and politics and thereby attained world-wide fame in literary circles.

Jamal-ud Din was a man of many talents, a versatile genius, an outstanding leader and politician, an eminent writer and a fearless journalist and orator. He was one of the most advanced Muslims of his time, both in religious thought and in action. A perfect master of nearly all the important Muslim languages, and endowed with the most winning eloquence, his restless soul could not remain content or confined to one place. He migrated from one country to another, making fiery speeches, expounding his philosophy, calling upon Muslims to rise up to their present needs and responsibilities, and to unite their forces against Western imperialism. The extent of his influence either in the past or in the present world is yet to be properly gauged. Some of the prominent men and leaders in India, Egypt, Iran and Turkey came under his influence and were proud to be called his followers. Some of the greatest theologians of the time, such as Mufti Sheikh Mohammed Abdhu and quite a large number of men of the younger generation, who later became great political leaders, such as Zaghlol Pasha of Egypt, were among his disciples.

Jamal-ud Din was a prolific writer. He wrote letters, spoke a great deal and thereby transformed into miniature Jamal-ud-Dins, all those who came into contact with him. He never claimed to be a teacher or a renewer, yet no one in his time stirred the soul of Islam so deeply as he did. His spirit is still working in the world of Islam and nobody knows when and how it will end.

Jamal-ud Din is the author of many books, most important among these being his treatise entitled "In Reply to the Naturalists,"

published in India in the year 1879 in the Urdu language. Sheikh Abdhu translated it into Arabic and it was reprinted several times. In the first chapter of his book Jamal-ud-Din expounds Darwin's theory of evolution and sets forth various arguments against it. A French translation of this valuable work by M. Goichon appeared in 1842 under the title of "Refutation des Materialistes".

Jamal-ud Din's personality permeates his writings. As he was deadly opposed to Western imperialism, his writings contain some bitter criticisms and comments on British atrocities in various parts of the world. The fiery temperament of the Sayid, his indomitable will and courage could not be lulled or subdued by British gold or repressions.

Istanbul was to remain his home towards the closing years of his life. He accepted the invitation of Sultan Abdul Hamid a second time and moved to his court at Constantinople. In the beginning all went well with him and he was raised to the nobility. But Sayid's sharp criticism of Abdul Hamid's government, and especially his denunciation of the conservative *Ulama,* could not be ignored or telerated for very long. Gradually he came to be treated as a political pensioner and was not allowed to move freely or to leave the country. A terrible disease kept him from writing, and he ceased to take an active part in social gatherings. Confined to his bed, his malady increased until it culminated in his death in 1897. Some even think that he was secretly done away with, being poisoned by the orders of the Sultan. He was buried at the Turkish capital, but in 1944 his remains were removed to Kabul and interred within the campus of the Kabul University to inspire coming Afghan generations.

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CHAPTER XXVIII

# RISE OF THE MOHAMMEDZAIS (OR BARAKZAIS)

The cruel death of Wazir Fateh Khan at the hands of Shah Mahmud and his son, Kamran, aroused the vengeance of the resourceful Barakzai brothers. The first to enter the field was Dost Mohammed. Advancing from Kashmir, he took Peshawar and Kabul, and drove the Shah and his son from all their possessions except Herat, where they maintained a precarious footing for a few years, while the rest of Afghanistan was parcelled out among the Barakzai brothers.

In the confusion that followed, Afghanistan suffered heavily. Balkh was seized by the ruler of Bokhara, the trans-Indus Afghan districts were occupied by the Sikhs, while the outlying provinces of Sindh and Baluchistan practically assumed independence. In the partition of Afghanistan, Ghazni, Kabul and Jalalabad fell to the lot of Dost Mohammed (1826), who thus became the most powerful of the Barakzai brothers.

**Dost Mohammed (or the Grand Amir).**

Dost Mohammed is the founder of the Barakzai (or Mohammedzai) dynasty, which is still in power. As soon as his position was secure, he made up his mind to recover Peshawar, which had been occupied by the Sikhs during the turmoil that followed the death of Wazir Fateh Khan. Dost Mohammed could not forget that Peshawar was an integral part of Afghanistan and that the Sikhs succeeded in laying their hands on it when the fratricidal war was going on in Afghanistan. Knowing, that negotiations would be of no avail, Dost Mohammed resolved to wrest it from the Sikhs by force. To give his expedition a religious tinge, he assumed the title of Amir-ul-Mominin (Leader of the Faithful), and declared Jehad (religious war), calling upon his people to rally around

his banner. The response was most encouraging and warriors of Islam came from far and wide, even from beyond the Oxus. At their head the Amir advanced upon Peshawar, confident of a speedy victory. But the shrewd Sikh leader, finding himself too weak to meet him in the open field, sowed treason and dissension in the Amir's camp, the result being that the invading force melted away, and Peshawar was permanently lost to the Afghans.

In November, 1837, Mohammed Shah Kajar of Persia laid siege to Herat, which was looked upon by the British as "Key to India." The Russians, anxious to have the Persians compensate themselves with Afghan territories for the Russian conquests of some of the Persian provinces in the Caucasus, supported the Persians in their designs. The British, fearful that Persia was falling completely under Russian influence and that the occupation of Herat by Persia would lead to Russian infiltration into Afghanistan, determined to stem the tide by entering into an alliance with the rulers of Herat, Kabul and Kandahar. With this in view a mission was sent to Kabul under Captain Alexander Burnes. Dost Mohammed was pleased to welcome the representative of a power from which he expected support in his attempts to recover Peshawar. But he was soon disillusioned, for he could not obtain from the British Envoy the assurances which he hoped for. At this critical time the appearance of a Russian agent, Vicovitch, at the court of Kabul alarmed the British so much that negotiations with the Amir were broken off, and Burnes was ordered to leave the Afghan capital immediately.

The failure of Burne's mission gave the Governor-General of India, Lord Auckland, a pretext to invade Afghanistan, with the object of restoring Shah Shuja to the throne of Kabul. This was the beginning of the First Anglo-Afghan War (1838-1842). A British army assembled at Firozpur (December 1838). Shah Shuja was supplied with the necessary funds to raise an army of his own. As the Sikhs would not allow the British to pass through their territories, it was decided that the British forces (now called the Army of the Indus) would march along the Satluj

to the Indus, and then via Sukkar and Shikarpur and through the Bolan Pass advance on Kandahar. In April, 1839, after suffering terrible privations and heavy losses among their transport animals from the predatory attacks of the Baluch, Kakars and Achakzais, the Army of the Indus, under its leader, General Keane, entered Kandahar; and Shah Shuja was crowned in the mosque next to the mausoleum of Ahmad Shah Durrani.

On the 27th of June the British forces, accompanied by Shah Shuja, moved northwards, and, on the 21st of July, after a severe encounter, the citadel of Ghazni was carried by storm. Ghulam Haider, the eldest son of the Amir, being among the prisoners. In August, 1839, the British advanced on Kabul. The Amir, who had taken a position near Arghandi, 15 miles west of Kabul, finding his position untenable, left for Bamian hotly pursued by a British cavalry. The British, entering Kabul, installed Shah Shuja on the throne. Meanwhile, Dost Mohammed Khan had made good his escape to Balkh. A little later he went to Bokhara, whose ruler, Nasrullah Khan, had offered him asylum. Shortly afterwards the Amir was, however, treacherously arrested and put into prison.

The Afghans did not take kindly to the occupation of their capital by a foreign power, nor would they tolerate being ruled by a sovereign who was merely a tool in the hands of the British. Insurrections broke out in quick succession in various parts of the country. As soon as the flames were stamped out in one quarter, they broke out afresh in another.

Dost Mohammed, hearing the news of these uprisings and of the bold stand of his people against the British and their protege, Shah Shuja, espcaped from prison, and, returning to Afghanistan, joined hands with his partisans. Fierce battles and skirmishes took place in and around Kabul. Finally, on November 2,1840, a severe battle was fought at Parwandarah, 45 miles north of Kabul, between a British force led by General Sale and the Amir, in which the latter had the upper hand. But, to the surprise of all, soon after the battle, the Amir disappeared from the scene;

no one knew where he went or why or what had happened to him. The mystery was solved the next day when it was learnt that the Amir had surrendered himself to the British in Kabul. He was, however, honourably treated and deported to India with nearly all the members of his family.

Even after the departure of the Amir from Afghanistan the situation did not improve. Constant outbreaks all over the country showed that the situation was growing rapidly worse. When winter set in, the British garrison in Kabul found its position quite untenable. Appeals were sent to General Sale at Gandomak and General Nott at Kandahar to come to its rescue. Sale, finding that he had not sufficient transport, preferred to fall back on Jalalabad, while Nott, due to heavy snow could not advance beyond Ghazni. The British force in Kabul, finding itself entrapped, decided to come to terms with Akbar Khan, Dost Mohammad's son, promising to quit Afghanistan without delay and setting Dost Mohammed free if it was assured of safe-conduct. But Macnaughten, the British political officer, was still hopeful of success and was in no mood to quit Kabul as contemplated. He rather set about sowing dissension among the Afghan chiefs. The result was most disastrous to him as well as to the British troops in Kabul. Akbar Khan, inviting Macnaughten to a private meeting, killed him with his own hands, while the British troops, losing all hope, came out of their cantonments and left Kabul at a time when it was in the grip of a very severe cold wave.

On January 6,1842, the British forces and camp followers, in all 16,500 men, marched out of Kabul, intending to go to Hindustan. Bands of Afghans swarmed around the line of their retreat. The British officers lost their heads and the troops their morale. Every one wanted to make good his escape. Discipline was at an end and the massacre was terrible. Seven days later one solitary survivor, Dr. Brydon, half dead from wounds and exhaustion, staggered into Jalalabad to tell the story of the disaster to the astounded British garrison.

Lord Ellenborough, who had succeeded Lord Auckland as Governor-General of India, decided on the immediate evacuation of Afghanistan. Dost Mohammed was released and allowed to return to Afghanistan which was now without a ruler, as Shah Shuja was killed by his own subjects after the British had left the capital.

Thus ended the final phase of the First Anglo-Afghan War, which left very bitter memories behind. The Afghans did not forget that their country had been invaded and that thousands of innocent people had been killed without any justification whatsoever. Neither did the British gain anything from this expedition. It cost them nearly 20,000 lives and the waste of more than 20,000,000 pounds. Nearly all the British writers agree that the war was an unjust one and that it injured the reputation of the British for fair dealings.

Dost Mohammad reigned until 1863, and this time was usefully utilized in consolidating his position and in establishing peace and order in Afghanistan. He died at Herat in June, 1863, only thirteen days after the capture of the city.

**Amir Sher Ali Khan.**

Dost Mohammed Khan was succeeded by his third son, Sher Ali. Sher Ali's brothers, Afzal and Azam, however, did not come forward to tender their allegiance. They rose against him and for five years a fratricidal war continued, until in the autumn of 1868, the Amir got the upper hand and was able to establish his authority throughout the country.

Unfortunately, the Amir's relations with the British, which had been very cordial in the beginning, deteriorated with the passing of the years, and ultimately culminated in the Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878-1881). Sher Ali Khan, seeing his country invaded by the British, went to Mazar-i-Sharif, hoping to get some help from Russia. But the Russians advised him to make his peace with the British directly. The Amir worn out by physical diseases and mental worries, died at Mazar on February 21, 1879.

Sher Ali Khan was indeed an enlightened monarch who sincerely wished to see Afghanistan walk on the path of progress and prosperity. He had an assembly of elders to advise him on important matters of public welfare. He laid the foundation of a military academy, organized the army along modern lines and established a Pushto Bureau to translate English books on military science into that language. He started a Persian paper, "Shamsun Nahar", and established a regular postal system. But unfortunately, he could not carry out his programme of reforms to a successful end because of the civil war and foreign intervention. The Second Anglo-Afghan War nullified nearly all of his useful works and involved the country once again in anarchy and unrest, which lasted for a quarter of a century and covered the whole reign of Amir Abdur Rahman Khan.

Sher Ali Khan was followed by his son, Yakub Khan, who was a weakling, not even a shadow of his illustrious father. He signed the Treaty of Gandomak (May 26, 1879), agreeing to receive a permanent British Embassy with a suitable escort at Kabul ; to conduct his foreign relations with other States "in accordance with the wishes and advice" of the British Government and to allow such rectification of the frontier as was demanded by the advocates of the Forward Policy. In return for these concessions, the Amir was promised help against foreign aggression.

The triumph, however, was short-lived. On September 3, 1879, Cavagnari, the British Envoy, and the whole of his escort were murdered to a man in the Bala Hissar of Kabul. British forces once again went into motion and before the close of October, General Roberts was able to occupy Kabul. Yakub Khan abdicated and was sent to India, where he resided until his death in 1923.

Reborts' position in Kabul was far from secure. The Afghans had once again risen *en masse* against the foreigners in their country. In winter there was fierce fighting in and around Kabul. In one of these battles near Kala-i-Kazi, Reborts was utterly defeated and was forced to take shelter in his cantonment at Sherpur. It



*A wing of Women's Medical Hospital, Kabul.*

soon became evident that to hold Afghanistan permanently was beyond the resources of the British Empire. The new Viceroy, Lord Ripon, was instructed to bring about a speedy but peaceful settlement of the Afghan question.

**Abdur Rahman Khan.**

It was at this time that Abdur Rahman, a grandson of Dost Mohammed, who since 1868 had been living in exile beyond the Oxus, appeared on the scene. The British, who were hard-pressed on all sides, and one of whose forces was completely annihilated at Maiwand (July 27, 1880), recognized Abdur Rahman as the Amir of Kabul and decided to evacute Afghanistan without delay. Thus ended the Second Anglo-Afghan war.

Abdur Rahman Khan then with great energy and determination set about establishing peace and a strong central Government in Afghanistan. In this he succeeded marvellously and left a peaceful throne to his successor. But Abdur Rahman's relations with the British were never cordial because of the gradual encroachment of that power on Afghan soil. The pressure ultimately took the form of an ultimatum and the Amir was forced under threat of war to sign the Treaty of Durand (November 12, 1893).

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Chapter XXIX

# AWAKENING AFGHANISTAN

The dawn of the twentieth century saw a new Afghanistan coming into being. Amir Habibullah Khan, who had succeeded his father, Abdur Rahman Khan, in 1901, was on the whole an enlightened monarch. Free from internal strife and to a large extent from foreign pressure, the Amir found time to devote to the welfare of his people. In 1903, he laid the foundation of a school on modern lines, the Habibia, which has since then played an important role in the cultural development of Afghanistan. Habibullah constructed roads, extended telegraphic installations, and followed an "open door" policy. Steps were taken to introduce machinery and other modern conveniences into Afghanistan. A weekly Persian paper "Sirajul Akhbar" was started and entrusted to the famous Afghan writer and politician, Mahmud-i-Tarzi. This paper, anti-colonial in nature, infused a new life into the country and helped awakening national aspirations. Tarzi is considered the intellectual leader of the early twentith century. He soon became the centre of national culture and revival. His influence in Afghan literature is significant, not only because of his contributions to the development of Afghan nationalist thought, but also because he trained and inspired a number of young men who later were to play major roles in the development of modern Afghanistan.

The Amir was a peace-loving sovereign. He did not like to take advantage of the difficulties of his neighbours, and in pursuance of this policy observed strict neutrality in World War I. In February, 1919, just after the War, he thought that the time had come when he should prove the merits of his policy to his nation. He wrote to the Viceroy of India demanding written recognition by the Peace Conference of Paris of Afghanistan's

"absolute liberty, freedom of action, and perpetual independence." But before a reply could reach Kabul, the Amir was assassinated in his shooting camp at Kalagosh in the Laghman valley (February 20, 1919).

**King Amanullah.**

After the death of Habibullah Khan, his younger brother, Nasrullah Khan, who was with the Amir, proclaimed himself the successor to the throne. But Amanullah Khan, the third son of the Amir, who was then in the capital, taking advantage of his position, took possession of the throne and declared himself King of Afghanistan. The army in Jalalabad also supported his cause and Nasrullah Khan was forced to abdicate.

Amanullah's first act after accession was to proclaim the complete independence of Afghanistan both in internal and external affairs. He communicated his decision to the Viceroy of India as well; but on receiving no encouraging reply, he sent his forces to the eastern and southern borders, and adopted every precautionary measure against a surprise attack from the British. This, however, resulted in the Third Anglo-Afghan War or the War of Independence.

On May 3, 1919, without a declaration of war from either side, shots were exchanged at the mouth of the Khyber Pass. From this incident hostilities began all along the border. But the war was of a very short duration. The operations in the northern and southern sectors went against the Afghans and the British were able to capture some of the frontier posts. These losses, however, were soon compensated for by the rapid advance of Sardar Mohammed Nadir Khan (later King Mohammed Nadir Shah) and his brothers into the British territory. As a result of these activities, an armistice was signed shortly after, both sides withdrew from their advanced positions into their own territories and complete independence of Afghanistan was recognized.

Amanullah then established diplomatic and cultural relations with the outside world. Having achieved his goal, he started to introduce reforms on European lines inside Afghanistan and to prepare



*Women in Afghanistan now take an active part in all walks of life. Here they are seen performing experiments in the laboratory of the Medical College at Kabul.*

his people to shoulder the responsibilities of a modern international life. After his European tour, the impression of all he had seen made him eager to introduce the Western way of life into his own country with revolutionary swiftness. This brought him into trouble with a certain group of reactionaries, supported by foreign elements. The country was soon involved in a civil war. A brigand-chief, Habibullah by name, the son of a water-carrier, hence the nickname of "Bacha-i-Saqa," took advantage of the confusion. In January, 1929, with his band of outlaws, he succeeded in occupying Kabul. Amanullah abdicated and left for Kandahar by car. In the spring of the same year, he made a futile attempt to recover the capital. He then decided to leave the country, and via India left for Rome. The highway man seized power, declared himself king, and ushered in a reign of terror which lasted for nine months.

At this time, Sardar Mohammed Nadir Khan was in southern France and confined to bed. Hearing the sad news from home, he decided to leave France in all haste and return to Afghanistan to relieve his countrymen from the cruel clutches of this ruthless tyrant. For eight months (March to October), the struggle for deliverance continued, Nadir Khan and his brothers playing a prominent role in the drama. At last on October 16, 1929, their efforts were crowned with success. The bandit was driven out of Kabul and peace was restored. In a tribal assembly held at Salamkhana (Audience Hall) of Kabul, Mohammed Nadir Khan was unanimously elected King of Afghanistan.

**King Mohammed Nadir Shah.**

The first aim of the new King was to pacify the country and to restore peace and order. The brigand-chief and his accomplices were still at large. They were arrested, court-martialled and done away with. Thereafter the King had time to devote his attention to internal reforms. Schools and other useful institutions and cultural centres were reoponed, and new ones were added to them to meet the growing needs of the country. A Literary Academy came into being to help advance enlightenment and literacy among the masses. A military college was founded on

the ruins of the Bala Hissar. A medical faculty was started and a group of Afghan graduates were sent abroad for higher education. New roads were built to facilitate trade and transportation within the country. A bank was established to help businessmen in their foreign transactions. Dams were built to store water. But the crowning achievment of his reign was the promulgation of a constitution, which provided for an Upper and a Lower House.

Unfortunately, this ordered and steady march of progress was tragically interrupted by the murder of the King on the afternoon of November 8, 1933, when he was attending a prize-distribution function of school children. No disorder took place; all the high ranking military and civil officers stood loyally by Prince Mohammed Zahir, the only surviving son of the late King, who was duly placed on his father's throne and declared King of Afghanistan.

**King Mohammed Zahir Shah.**

His Majesty King Mohammed Zahir Shah, the present ruler of Afghanistan, was only nineteen when he was asked to shoulder the responsibilities of an Afghan king. Even at this tender age, he proved himself most worthy of the trust that the nation expected of him.

King Zahir Shah was born in Kabul in 1914. After completing his elementary education at home, he proceeded to France for higher education in 1924. After pursuing his studies at various French institutions, the King returned home in 1930, where he joined the Military Academy and gave sufficient proof of his great mental powers. He was then asked to work in different departments of public affairs, where he won the affection and esteem of those who came in touch with him.

The reign of King Zahir Shah has been a period of steady progress and national awakening. On the very day of his accession, the young King declared that he would scrupulously follow in the footsteps of his father and carry out his programmes of socio-economic reforms. The advances which have been made since then in various fields are quite considerable when seen in the light of the innumerable difficulties that the Government has had to cope with.



*Dr. Mahbuba Siraj (Rafiq)*

*Mahbuba Siraj is the first among the Afghan women to get the degree of doctorate in literature from a foreign university. Accompanying her father, Sardar Assadullah Siraj to Ankara, where he was appointed Afghan Ambassador, Dr. Siraj availing herself of the opportunity made full use of the Turkish libraries and archives. Her thesis in Persian on the life, works, philosophy and metaphysics of Maulana Jalaluddin Balkhi, is a book of outstanding merits. It was published by the Ministry of Press and was very favourably reviewed by some of the leading Turkish papers.*

*Dr. Siraj still takes a keen interest in the cultural and educational uplift of the country. Though an official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs she often finds time to come to the Faculty of Letters and take a class in Persian literature.*

King Zahir Shah is the first Afghan ruler to have the cultures of both East and West to his credit. Besides his own mother tongues, Pushto and Persian, he speaks French fluently and knows English fairly well. He has developed a special taste for books and fine arts, and his private library is well furnished. A man of high noble principles and broad outlook, he rules by kindness rather than by force, and by persuasion rather than by repression. Being simple in his personal habits and easily accessible to all, he has become the idol of his nation. He moves freely in the countryside, mixing with the masses and discussing with them in a friendly atmosphere the vast projects the Government has in hand for the cultural and material progress of the country. An impression of intense sincerity is his only platform weapon. Being extremely democratic, he leaves the entire organization of the country into the hands of his Prime Minister, who takes important decisions in Majlis-i-Wozara (the Council of Ministers).

During the past decade (1953—March, 1963), when Sardar Mohammed Daoud was the Premier, Afghanistan enjoyed a period of unprecedented internal peace and rapid progress in all walks of life. The Prime Minister, a man of great force and inexhaustible energy, during his tenure of office showed an ability in organization that amounted to genius. He recognized no obstacle either for himself or for his colleagues. If anyone complained that the task he was set to was not possible, Prime Minister Daoud's answer was brief but emphatic: "Nothing is impossible in this world. You have only to try it seriously and it will be done." To most of the Afghans he was a hero, who owed his popularity to his extremely fine domestic policy as well as to foreign policy. The most significant achievement of his administration had been stability to which can be attributed two important aspects, the full employment of the people in pursuit of profitable projects and the betterment of the living standard. Sardar Daoud implemented the first five-year plan successfully, and the second one launched by him in 1962 is being carried through by the present Government headed by Dr. Mohammad Yusuf with great vigour and zeal.

But the crowning achievement of Sardar Mohammed Daoud, that will go down in history with every mark of respect and will keep his memory green for all times to come, was his bold step to emancipate the Afghan women from the drudgeries that they have undergone for centuries. Today, thanks to his initiative, a revolution has taken place in the life and status of women. There is no end to the number of girls who are successfully graduated every year from the schools and colleges. A large number proceed abroad for higher education. There is no subject which they do not study; medicine, science, languages, law and many others. With men they take competitive examinations. All jobs in all departments are open to them; no profession or position is barred to them provided they have the necessary qualifications.

Today, the wind of change is blowing over the whole face of the country. Great industrial plants, clean and symmetrical, appear on all sides. New roads and highways are being built, facilitating trade and intercourse. Notable progress has been made in improving public health; life expectancy is rising steadily. The standard of living goes up and up; so does the level of education and culture. Schools and colleges and various other educational institutions now dot the remotest parts of the country, combating ignorance, superstition, disease, hunger and poverty, which generally go together. Thanks, to the help of friendly countries, a new Afghanistan with a new culture is coming into being. The Afghanistan of today is quite different from what it was a decade ago. Illiteracy, which is a serious economic liability as well as a brake on cultural development, is being eliminated. Educational and intellectual progress is opening the eyes of the country. The cry of social reform is heard from every corner. People are beginning to see the defects of the existing social organization, and sincerely wish to unify all communities into one homogeneous whole, to make each member feel that he is a part, not merely of a family, clan or tribe, but of the nation as a whole. The solidarity of all classes and communities is the chief aim of the social reformers. The work has begun in earnest, but



*Dr. MAHGUL M. ALI*

*Miss Mahgul Ali is the first Afghan lady-doctor. At a time when there were no adequate arrangements for an Afghan girl to learn medicine at home, she went abroad to study the subject of her own choice. Graduating from Fatima Jinnah Medical College, Lahore, and obtaining the degree of M.B.B.S., from the Panjab University, she proceeded to the U.S.A. in 1957 on an ICA scholarship to specialize in gynaecological surgery and obstetrics. After successfully completing the course, she returned home in 1961 to join the Women's Hospital in Kabul. In June 1963, she decided to go back to America to specialize in anaesthesia and general surgery, and to be in touch with recent developments and progress in her previous line.*

it will take some time to make the reforms effective and universal. Side by side with social reforms, a great political awakening is to be seen among the Afghans throughout the country. The whole attitude towards life and society is being changed and pessimism is giving place to optimism. Every one is hopeful of a bright future.

**Conclusion.**

Before we conclude this cultural history of the Afghans, it would not be out of place to briefly study some modern trends of thought prevailing among Afghan thinkers as to the introduction of Western ideas and institutions into the country.

The development of communications has shortened distances among all countries and is helping in exchange of ideas. At present no nation can lead an isolated life or build barriers or erect a China Wall to stem the cultural influences that are pouring in from all sides. A "closed door" policy is now neither possible nor desirable. No society can remain static for a long time, and no country can keep its people from being influenced by the products, techniques and ideas of the rest of the world. Developments take place in response to external factors, the impression of ideas and artifacts as well as in the wake of peaceful contacts or peaceful intrusion. A society may maintain the taste and flavour of its particular band of civilisation for some time, but change, it must. It also happens that the nature of change is sometimes violent and revolutionary, resulting in the overthrow of the old regime and the appearance of an altogether different society and culture, while others try to absorb these foreign influences and mould a new society out of them compatible with the time and environment in which they live. Today there is a great divergence of opinion among Afghan scholars and thinkers regarding the imbibing of foreign ideas. They may roughly be divided into three classes : the Conservative (Atiqakhiyal or Reactionary), the Progressive (or Modernist), and the Revolutionary.

The Conservatives adhere strictly to traditions and customs. They believe that there is little good outside their own country

and little knowledge outside their own literature. They always speak of the 'good old days', forgetting that their ancestors did not think it derogatory to their national pride to study the literature and avail themselves of the scientific achievements of other progressive nations. They studied Greek philosophy and medicine, Chinese art and painting, and Indian mathematics and metaphsics, and incorporated what was desirable in these systems into their own, magnanimously acknowledging the sources. Unfortunately, after the Genghizian invasions, this truly scientific spirit was abandoned for a narrorw-minded communalism, and all foreign influences, good or bad, were vigorously combated. This tendency gave rise to extreme conservatism, which soon degenerated into the worship of the past. Seclusion and separation became the watch-words of Afghan society. Whatever cause or causes may be attributed to this extreme conservatism, the result was not happy. Thought became stagnant and progress reactionary.

Another section of Afghan thinkers, mostly those who have been educated abroad, have fallen victims to the fascination of the West. They are dazzled by the rapid progress which the Western countries have made in the last two centuries. They have become totally subjected to the new knowledge and techniques. They have gone completely Western entertaining Western modes of thinking and Western patterns of social life and now look down on all that is Afghan. They prefer revolution to evolution.

The third vital section of the Afghan society has its root in Afghan tradition. They believe that although Afghan legacy has been outstripped by the tremendous advances of the Western countries in the various domains of science, yet Afghan civilisation has not entirely spent itself as a spiritual force, and can still provide them with inspiration and guidance. They want to assimilate the best in Western civilisation, without losing or forgetting their rich cultural heritage and spiritual values. They show a remarkable intellectual tolerance, and want to rouse the drooping faith of their conservative brothers. Their attitude to the past as well as to the future is liberal. They do not want to allow the past to become a fetter. They say: "We must take from the altar of the past




*Kabul Airport Terminal, one of the finest buildings in the East.*

the fire and glow, not the ashes. Everything is not good simply because it is old ; similarly, everything should not be looked upon as good because it is new. Great ones accept or reject one or the other after careful examination." They take inspiration from the past but are not afraid of modern ideas and Western thought and science. These modernists believe in the necessity of change. They want to discuss and study the reasons for their backwardness as well as to find ways of combating those evils that have crept into their society. They seek to liberate thought from ignorance, blind imitation and stagnation. They still believe in the spiritual vitality of their legacy and want to build a new edifice on the rich cultural heritage of their past.

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